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CHRISTOPHER  
COLUMBUS



# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

## CHAPTER I

### THE STORY-TELLER

THREE young lads, whose ages ranged from ten to fourteen years, sprawled lazily on a narrow strip of beach shelving down from Genoa's fortified wall, which met the sea with its grim rampart of stone. Their bare feet were stretched out to the waves that now and then ran up to them, colouring the stones a glassy green and then speeding swiftly back again with a soft hiss. The sea was quiet, and the crests of its waves were like a swarm of white mice that were trying to save themselves by a headlong rush to the shore. One of them was always in front and reached its goal at last, but the long train of those that followed it sank silently into the swirling deep. The sun was already setting behind the lofty mountains, whose immense trough of valleys opens out towards the sea, and the harbour of Genoa lay in bluish-black shade. But towards the south the sea took on a brighter and brighter blue as it neared the horizon and sparkled dazzlingly in the last blaze of the July day.

The chimes of the Angelus had already died away, but down here by the sea the sounds of labour had not ceased. There was scarcely room in the inner harbour for the vast number of vessels, which were either waiting to be unloaded or were setting out again with fresh cargo. At the other quays as well, right on to the great mole with its lighthouse there were serried rows of ships—two- and three-masters, whose enormous holds carried as much as twelve thousand tons, smaller caravels with short, stumpy masts and broad, square sails, and low galleys that were propelled by oars alone. Diminutive rowing-boats swarmed like flies round all of them. The tangle of masts, yards and ropes formed an irregular lattice-work to the right and left of the three lads. But at the place where they lay an opening allowed an uninterrupted view into the distance, for there was no landing-

place here, and it was possible to wade for about fifty paces into the water on the firm, rocky bottom. On that account the dockers from the adjacent quays bathed here, and the draft-horses and mules as well, when they were allowed a short respite from their labours. That same day a few of these reddish-brown nags splashed clumsily about in the water, while close to the wall two mules stood stock-still, pressing their heads firmly against the stones; their only movement was an occasional shiver that ran across their dark brown hides, or a whisk with their tails as they made a faint-hearted attempt to drive off the gnats that found a breeding-place in the surrounding seaweed and dung. Subways closed at night by heavy iron portcullises led into the city from various points of the harbour, through the fortified embankment, which was several yards high, and a third mule had retreated into the deepest shade of the nearest of these passages. In these vaults the rumbling and creaking of the high-wheeled, well-loaded carts, the trampling of the draft-animals, the rattling of their chains and the roars of their drivers as they urged them on, grew to a deafening noise. It came in intermittent gusts, now from this quarter now from that, smothering every other sound, until it slowly died away in the narrow lanes behind the wall.

The lads had to look after the animals. They were all too tired to ride them into the water, for they had been on their feet from an early hour. Here in the harbour there was always plenty of work for able hands, and Peter, the youngest of the boys, gleefully jingled a handful of copper coins. He then arranged them carefully on a flat stone in the order of their size and reckoned their value—a task that evidently gave him a good deal of trouble. Pleased with the result he stretched himself comfortably on his back again, swung his legs two or three times in the air and laughed at his companion Christopher, who lay at full length beside him trying to balance a peacock's feather on his nose. It was a long, bold nose, and the chin was strong and stubborn. Christopher could occupy himself with playthings like that, except when he was in the mood for gazing up at the sky with his sea-blue eyes and refusing to answer a single question. Like the other two boys he was poorly clad, but the rents and holes in his brown cloth breeches were at least patched, and his threadbare linen jacket, though much too short in the sleeves for him, was far cleaner than theirs. His skin, too, was fairer than that of the

other two and not so sunburnt. His hair was auburn, not dark, and his face, rather old-looking for his years, was covered with freckles.

A signal like the blare of a trumpet now sounded from across the sea. A stately three-master lay in the roads and wished to be towed to its anchorage by rowing-galleys; its brown sails flapped limply in the languid breeze that came from the mountains. The signal was answered by a shrill whistle from the inner harbour, and a white pennant was hoisted on one of the towers of the fortifications.

The third boy, Christopher's brother Bartholomew, who until then had been asleep, sat up and peered across at the three-master. "I wonder where it comes from?" he murmured.

Christopher, too, now raised his head and gave the ship a searching glance. Then he stretched himself out again and whirled the peacock's feather through the air in wide circles. After a while he answered, as though he had been reflecting deeply on Bartholomew's question:

"From the sandy beaches of Barbary . . . from the Pillars of Hercules . . . perhaps even from the recently discovered islands that the Portuguese have seen again."

"What is this about recently discovered islands? Tell me, Christopher!" cried Peter, as he rolled round on his front and in keen anticipation propped his head on his elbows.

"Maybe it was only a sleeping whale the damned Portuguese took for an island!" Bartholomew said with a jeer. "Tell me, is your great sailor, Prince Henry, once more on the move? He will sail to India yet, in the end, I'm sure! Have you met the Moor again, who lately told us the fairy-tale about the great river Senegal, where he said he had been with the Portuguese? In the heart of Africa, too!"

"The world is full of fairy-tales, and one day—they will come true," retorted Christopher indignantly, his face flushing. "But no one can sail to India. At Antioch, beyond Greece, the sea comes to an end, and the kingdom of the Grand Khan only begins far, far beyond the Holy Land. Father Benedict in the monastery here has a book. A man from Venice, Marco Polo, wrote it when he was a prisoner in Genoa. Everything is set down in the book just as he saw it. Travellers ride on camels through dreadful wildernesses to the country of the white elephant. The Saracens and the Sultan—who doesn't know all about them? But Marco



Polo alone saw the golden India. There every elephant is as high as the palace of Spinola here. And every one of them has a golden trunk, and its huge teeth, too, are of pure gold. But on the largest of the elephants there is a golden throne with a canopy of silk; there the Grand Khan sits as though he were in a tabernacle and flashes with diamonds. His curved scimitar cleaves a man from head to foot with one blow, through an iron helmet and a coat of mail. His wives sit on the other elephants in gay-coloured silk and gold, and Nubian slaves carry silk umbrellas after them on long bamboo poles. And there is music everywhere, and one can buy a load of delicious fruit for a copper coin. The splendour there is far, far finer than that of the king of France. He is stingy and poor and wears an old cloth doublet."

Peter, the youngest of the three, sprang to his feet and danced around wildly. "I'm going there with you. It must be fine to ride on camels, and you must also make me the present of a white elephant, Christopher! I'm going to work hard and make as much money every day as I've done to day." He jingled his coins with a satisfied air. "Uncle Francis will certainly take us with him, when he is allowed to travel to Palestine again. He has promised me that for a long time now. When he does, I mean to sit at the mast-head and always tell what I can see in the distance." Peter shouted some threats at one of the horses that had ventured rather far away, and the animal obediently came back at once. Then he squatted again beside Christopher, with his hands folded over his knees, and looked eagerly at him.

"There are said to be people," remarked Bartholomew thoughtfully, "who don't believe a word that Marco Polo says——"

"There are people who never believe anything," said Christopher, interrupting him, "but, as Father Benedict says, they have not brought the world a single step forward. Were there not many famous people here in Genoa who knew Marco Polo? Besides, the Great Council of Venice would not elect an impostor as one of its members. Marco Polo was viceroy to the Grand Khan for years. And he went still farther, as far as the island of Cipango (Japan), which lies in the farthest East, beyond even Cathay. There the very roofs are covered with plates of gold, and they have nothing there but golden dishes and silk dresses. When Marco Polo came back from there, his belt was as heavy as a coat of mail with gold nuggets alone, as big as doves' eggs, and jewels of priceless worth were hidden in the lining of

his clothes. I must go there some day! I mean to go there first and get gold and diamonds. With these I shall buy a caravel, the biggest that there is, and then——”

“And then?” asked his listeners all agog.

“Then I shall sail through the Pillars of Hercules, past Barbary, always towards the west, where the waves are mountain-high and ice-cold storms blow from the North, and thunder rolls and lightning flashes continually. There are huge monsters there that open their jaws wide—and in a trice you are inside them with ship and sails and masts. If you are not on your guard a monster like that will swallow you as the whale swallowed Jonah. But if you pray in good time to the Mother of God, the beast will not be able to close its jaws, and you can sail through between its teeth again as smoothly as those galleys yonder are sailing out of our harbour. You see, it has teeth as large as the crags at Fruttuoso, and when it opens and shuts its jaws there is a flood-tide even more terrible than the one in which godfather Luigi was recently drowned.”

At that Bartholomew burst into loud laughter and slapped his thighs. “You are really a great story-teller! Some pot-companion in a shore tavern must surely have hoaxed you, and you wish to pull our legs with the tale. Things like that don’t really exist. Besides, what do you want to do there on those mountain-high waves with your sea-monsters? Many a one has been driven there by storms, but, as yet, no one who might have told such silly stories has ever returned, in spite of the Mother of God!”

A crafty smile passed across Christopher’s face, and he waved his peacock’s feather through the air, as though he wished to paint a sign on the blue sky. “Perhaps I, too, won’t come back!” he murmured half to himself. “For Paradise lies somewhere in the West! Have you ever heard of the Isle of St. Brandan? Hundreds of people have seen it from a distance; on clear days it lies shining on the ocean two hundred sea-miles west of the Canary Islands; but it melts away like a mirage whenever a ship gets near to it. Still it was once reached—by a pious abbot from Scotland with his disciple St. Malo, and on the island they found the dead body of a giant. They raised him to life and converted him to Christianity. The giant knew of another island, which is surrounded by walls of polished gold, but there is no approach to it. And when they besought him to guide them to

it, he leaped into the sea and drew their ship after him on a rope. But a great storm drove them back, and soon afterwards the giant died for a second time and could not be resurrected again. Perhaps Antiglia, which you can find on our charts far in the West, is this isle of Paradise. Some years ago sailors even came to Prince Henry of Portugal and told him of this island of the seven cities; seven bishops with their parishioners took refuge there, when the Moors conquered Spain, and, just imagine! the sand of the sea there is of pure gold! The seamen were ordered to sail to the island again and bring back more exact information about it.

"Since then nothing more has been heard of them. I mean to go there, and if the sea is calm, I shall see at the bottom the ruins of the great island Atlantis, which a thousand years ago or even more was destroyed by an earthquake. Atlantis—Antiglia"—Christopher repeated the words, as though he took delight in their ring, and then he became silent.

Bartholomew shook his head in doubt, shrugged his shoulders and gave his brother a sidelong glance. Christopher noticing the glance took out of his jacket pocket a dark-grey stone which he had found not long before on the shore of the Bisagno quite near Genoa. The stone had, more or less, the shape of a spherical segment, and its round curve was smoothly polished. On it Christopher had marked points and lines with chalk. "Look here!" he said, sitting up. "These long lines there outline the Mediterranean Sea. The place where we are lying just now is up in this corner here. Eastwards right across Asia the road runs to Cathay and Cipango; these lands here are the eastern end of the inhabited world. Beyond that stretches boundless water. Here in the West is the coast of Africa, Portugal and Spain. Up at the top there it is cold winter and summer. The sea is like milk there, and the air is quite thick with white mist. Huge dogs that speak like human beings live there—and squat, fat people with hides like animals. They have their faces at their backs, because those terrible dogs and other ravenous beasts are always running after them. I don't intend to go there. But here in the West the earth does not end yet with the coast of Africa and Portugal. The Portuguese have found a whole archipelago lying in front of Cape Verde, and Italians have discovered Madeira, where the Portuguese also are now settled. I once saw an Italian map that must have been a hundred years

old; on that map it is still called the Timber Island, which was the name we formerly gave it. And on the same map further out there lies another host of islands, where again the Portuguese have nowadays their colony of Santa Maria. Many of these islands are still to be found, if only I could get there first."

The other two stared thoughtfully at the stone, which presented an image of the inhabited world—a surface gently curved and almost as round as a circle.

"Tell me, please, Christopher," Peter suddenly whispered, looking cautiously around, as though he were afraid there might be listeners. "What like is the earth? Can it really be a globe?"

Christopher had stretched himself out at full length again and seized his peacock's feather. "Certainly it is a globe," he said, drawing out his words, "otherwise it could not stay on the water, as it does; it floats like an air-bubble on the uppermost side of an immense sphere of water——"

"No, no, I don't mean it like that," Peter interrupted him vehemently. "At the Franciscan school just now we have a tall young fellow, who recently came here with his father from Pisa. You can ask him and he will tell you that all the learned men have long known that earth and water form only one single globe, and that on this globe there are far more islands and continents than we are likely to know about in school. Once when Father Benedict heard him speak about this in the cloister he answered him very sharply."

Christopher raised his head and looked at the boy in alarm. Then he drew himself up. "One single globe!" he burst out passionately, a dark flush overspreading his face. Slowly he repeated the words: "One single round globe!" and curved his hand as though he were holding an apple. With his other hand he put the painted stone on his finger-tips like a lid, lifted it high up as though he were performing some priestly action, and looked up at it timidly with wide-open astonished eyes. The sky formed blue bands between the fingers of this hand, and these bands ran like meridian lines round the terrestrial globe which he saw before him with his mind's eye. They grew into the blue ocean that sent its foaming billows westwards from the Pillars of Hercules at the opening of the Mediterranean Sea. Farther and farther round the globe it surged till it reached the shores of India, Cipango and Cathay. On these blue waves floated myriads of ships with billowing sails, racing with one another

to be the first to arrive at those gleaming gold-coasts of the Eastern world, which Marco Polo had reached only after years of arduous travelling across deserts and mountains. And, as if to assure himself of the reality of what he saw before him, he went on describing circles round this globe with the fingers of his other hand, murmuring with growing excitement: "That is how we shall sail to India—from Genoa through the Pillars of Hercules straight on towards the West—always farther and farther on the open sea, and we shall land—we *must* at last land—at the kingdom of the Grand Khan. No camels will be needed, only ships, ships!" As if under a spell he continued to gaze up at his hand. His brows were knit, and his flushed face had almost an angry look.

His two companions had moved shyly away from him, and they now got to their feet. For a little while they stood irresolute, gaping in amazement. Then Bartholomew with a scornful toss of his head freed himself from the spell which they, too, felt dimly. "You story-teller! You impudent liar!" he cried. "Don't let Father Benedict hear you! He'll refuse to absolve you at your next confession!" With that he struck the stone from Christopher's hand and sent it rolling far out into the surf, and then ran with long jumps along the harbour wall. Peter followed him, for they both knew the fiery temper of their eldest comrade.

But Christopher made no sign of going after them. For some time he stared in front of him with an absent-minded air, his hands moving as though they were shaping spheres. Then he rose and walked slowly through the nearest subway, past the mule into the city. His eyes were fixed on the ground, as though he were in search of something there. He merely looked up bewildered, when some mule-driver or porter shoved him roughly aside. Meanwhile dusk had fallen, and the usual evening stir at the pot-houses near the harbour filled the narrow streets. At dirty wooden tables before the vaults of the taverns the carters sat slicing their salami-sausages and mouldy bread. Red wine shone in the beakers, and the oily fumes of fried fish steamed from the eating-houses. Oars and boat-hooks hung from many of the house walls. In front of these fishermen sat on stools, sharing out the haul from their nets into earthenware pots. The pavements were strewn with the refuse of fish, melons and onions, and an offensively pungent smell of food and fermentation filled

the air. Inn-keepers ran busily about; here and there the sound of music could be heard, and women with their faces already flushed with wine looked expectantly up and down the street, for many of the military were quartered in the city. For several years now Genoa had had a French garrison, who had put an end to the perpetual struggle for supremacy of the native aristocracy. Besides, a large load of silver had arrived that day from Spain, under military escort, for the Bank of San Giorgio. These well-paid foreign guests were as much liked for their liberality, as they were feared on account of their bloodthirsty brawls.

The boy took his way through streets that grew darker and darker to the little Church of San Matteo. There a Dominican monk from Nervi was holding in the evenings a week's missionary services, such as were usual since the Crusades. They were well attended, and on this occasion Christopher arrived too late. The church was packed, and a dense crowd of hearers clad in sombre garments overflowed into the street. The interior of the church was brilliantly illumined, and the light seen over the heads of the throng that filled the vaulted doorway was like the fire in a black oven. Christopher attempted to force his way at least to the steps leading up to the entrance, but he was roughly thrust back and he gave up the attempt in disgust. He stood for a while, squeezed between broad-hipped women, listening to the preacher's words. But only broken snatches of them reached him from the interior. The greater part was swallowed up by the echo beneath the vault of the entrance. Moreover, on that day he was too full of his own thoughts to give the preacher an attentive hearing. Only a single phrase, which the Father repeated from time to time, became intelligible to him by reason of its repetition. It was evidently the theme of his discourse: "And still the Holy Sepulchre is in the hands of the infidels!"

As soon as the monk's voice fell silent, Christopher pressed through the crowd and hurried to his home in the suburb outside the Porta San Andrea. On the way he murmured again and again, half unconsciously, the words he had just heard, whose strange, lilting melody had left so deep an impression on him -- "And still the Holy Sepulchre is in the hands of the infidels!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE RIDDLE OF COLUMBUS

IT is possible that Columbus in his youth may have spent a day at the harbour of Genoa like the one the preceding chapter has attempted to describe. It is possible—but that is all! For among the great men of the world's history there are very few whose development up to the very threshold of their success is so shrouded in darkness as his.

Even during his lifetime the credulous imagination of his contemporaries, his friends and his enemies, created round him a thicket of sagas and legends, which until now has remained impenetrable, although in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a host of international investigators attempted to clear it with the utmost possible expenditure of knowledge and acumen. It is quite impossible to survey the vast array of books devoted to the solution of the riddle of Columbus. Every visible point in the course of his life has been placed under the microscope and subjected to the keenest acid-tests of scientific criticism. But until he makes his appearance in Spain, *i.e.* until some time about 1484, there are comparatively few of these fixed points to be found. They give but the faintest indications of any definite course, and in this first period there is not a single detail that has not been established with overwhelming certainty by one investigator and completely contradicted with ironical superiority by some other. Often enough the result has been to pour out the baby with the bath. Columbus himself has had to suffer from the irritation of scholars with one another and from the wrath they have in common against the lack of judgment shown by the ancient chroniclers and biographers. If the one lauded him to the skies as a martyr and saint, the other took pride in unmasking him as an ignorant and incapable braggart or an unscrupulous adventurer. Their sole point of agreement was in the belief that at decisive moments he was an extraordinary favourite of fortune.

What is the reason for this confusion? The number of reliable

documents dating from the fifteenth century itself is relatively small, and the difficulty of deciphering them gives the widest scope both for interpretation and for error. Perhaps in Spain or Portugal there may still be official records mouldering in the archives of some city or monastery that contain surprises. In the Spring of 1930 a silly newspaper cackled the tidings that according to some documents that had recently been found, Columbus had discovered America—and indeed the mainland at Florida straight away—not in 1492 but in 1464, while on a piratical expedition. According to this he was a youth of eighteen years and was accompanied by his brother Diego, who was not even born then! After that there was no more word of the promised investigation at an historical Congress in Madrid of this discovery made by a Peruvian scholar. The Italian archives may be reckoned as thoroughly exhausted. Besides, for the first half of his life Columbus was simply a man of the people, an artisan and sailor, on whom the police alone of the civic authorities were likely to keep an eye.

But even the evidence relating to our hero furnished by these plebeian and admittedly reliable documents, does not always agree with his own incidental statements. Columbus himself is often to blame for these contradictions. He came from an environment in which "sailors' Latin"—the fantastic exaggerations or the downright lies of swaggering seafarers from all corners of the known world—was the only "newspaper" and the daily topic of conversation; and even at an early period his own liking for spinning yarns betrays a literary talent which finds expression in the descriptions of his voyages given afterwards by the successful discoverer in a manner quite unusual for that age. From his youth onwards his own longing for marvels was strong, and it deepened with the conviction, which in the end enveloped him like a fog, that he was the chosen instrument of Higher Powers, for whom nothing was impossible. His admirers are in no way behind him in this art of embellishment; in the main it is a quite natural characteristic of that epoch, before whose wondering eyes the unprecedented marvels of a new world were unveiled.

Doubtless the past with its darker side was little suited to the image of a divinely favoured world-discoverer, which Columbus himself suddenly saw before him in the bright mirror of his fame. It may be assumed from the secrecy with which he sur-



rounded his youth and his years of adolescence that he was ashamed of them and believed there was a good deal in his past that he had to hide. His son and first biographer Fernando, who was related by marriage to the oldest aristocracy of Castille, has respected this shame with an excessive filial piety. In the book entitled *Histories*, which was mainly ascribed to him, although it did not appear until 1571, long after his death, he has scarcely made any attempt to scrutinize and complete by a thorough investigation his father's laconic and vague allusions to his earlier experiences. Had this been done immediately after his death it would have easily led to trustworthy results. No doubt he was influenced by a young man's feeling that his father did not wish to be drawn even by his nearest relatives about the period preceding his rise.

Difficulties begin at an early stage with the question, where and when was Columbus born? Not even his son is able to answer it. Seven cities of Greece strive for the honour of being the birthplace of the poet Homer. At least sixteen cities and towns of Italy claim the discoverer of America as an honorary citizen. In this lofty-spirited rivalry, which has been carried on with great heat, and in which Corsica has taken part, Genoa has been awarded pride of place.

If any one wishes to cover up his traces, he must above all, not betray his origin. Columbus never boasted of his native city. His first acknowledgment of it is in a testamentary disposition dated 22nd February 1494. In this he calls himself a born Genoese and binds his successors in the city of Genoa "because I too was born there and came from there," to maintain a branch of his family in a position suitable to their rank—probably the descendants of his only sister Bianchetta—so that they might be able to hold their own there until the distant future. This declaration, however, by no means satisfied those who doubt on principle. Proofs! proofs! they cried, and as matter of fact proofs were hard to find; for at that time the name Colombo was as common on the coast of Liguria as Smith and Brown are with us. Gradually, however, several documents have accumulated which refer, not to a particular Christoforo Colombo—there may have been numberless persons of that name—but to the family of one Domenico Colombo, whose three sons are called Chrostoporo, Bartolomeo and Giacomo. It is established beyond all doubt that Columbus had two brothers, Bartolomeo and

Giacomo (he was not called Diego until he went to Spain). It would surely be a remarkable coincidence if two different families at the same time and in the same region were so completely at one in their choice of names. It may therefore be taken as proved that the wool-weaver Domenico Colombo, born about 1418, came to Genoa from the neighbouring Quinto in the year 1439, had for his wife one Susanna Fontanarossa from the hamlet of Bisagno, and in 1450-51 as gate-keeper of the Porta San Andrea in the suburb Vico dritto de Ponticelli, the quarter of the weavers and of the poor, possessed a dwelling called the Casa dell'olivello, which must be held to be the birthplace of his sons. In 1470 he settled in the country-town of Savona, west from Genoa, where he earned a scanty living as weaver, inn-keeper and cheese-monger. In 1473 and 1477 he had to sell two houses which belonged to him in Genoa. In 1480 he returned to that city where he died about 1494. He thus lived long enough to learn of the discovery of the New World, and he certainly also knew that the Christobal Colon who had suddenly become so famous was his son, for his youngest son Giacomo now forthwith left the house of his parents and the weaver to whom he was apprenticed, and joined his elder brother in Seville.

Only one of these documents gives a definite indication of the year of Christopher's birth, and that is undoubtedly wrong: he is said to have been about twenty-seven years old on the 25th of August 1479. This is contradicted by another legal document, according to which he was already more than twenty-five in 1472. The first would make the date of his birth about 1450-51, the second about 1446-47. The latter date fits in so well with his own occasional references that we may be content to accept it. "Since my youth, for forty years now I have been on the sea," he writes in 1501 to the king of Spain. In this general review of the past he naturally includes the seven or eight years which he, in a manner, drained dry in Spain, waiting for the hour that was to decide his fate. When, however, in his diary of the 21st December 1492 he says expressly: "I was at sea for twenty-three years without any break worth mentioning," he is plainly *not* counting in the pause from 1484 to 1492. These twenty-three years are to be reckoned backwards from 1484, not from 1492. Both these reckonings lead concurrently to 1461 as the first year of his seaman's career. He was but fourteen years old when he first went to sea, although certainly we only

know the letter in which he makes this assertion from Fernando's *Histories*. It follows from this that the year of his birth is 1446-47. His contemporaries mostly took him to be older than this, for his hair was completely white when he was only thirty years old. But it is impossible to accept his own statement made in a letter to the Spanish monarchs dated 5th July 1505, giving an account of his fourth voyage to America, that he was already twenty-eight years old when he came to the Spanish Court. In all likelihood that is an error made by the person who copied or read the letter. If thirty-eight is substituted for twenty-eight that will give us once more 1447 as the year of his birth, for Columbus did not gain admission to the royal Court until the end of 1485. Finally he is said to have been fourteen years in Portugal; that, too, fits without strain into this reckoning. His visit to Portugal and the island of Madeira as early as 1470 is conclusively established by the legal deposition of the 25th August 1479 already mentioned. From 1470 until 1484 Portugal, including its colonies, must have been his chief head-quarters and his second home, in so far as one can speak of either in connection with a seaman who is most of the time at sea.

What did the youthful Christoforo learn at one of the cloister-schools in Genoa? In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, chiefly Latin, the international world-tongue of that period, and he learned it fairly well, for he used it fluently his whole life long. Most of the text-books from which he afterwards drew his many-sided knowledge were written in this colloquial language which was the medium of contemporary scholars; the native tongue was neglected in its favour. Columbus wrote Italian so imperfectly that many of his contemporaries as well as later historians insisted that he must have been a Spaniard, for he spoke and wrote Spanish like a native. For the rest he learned his father's trade while he was still a boy. If there was work to be done he had to give a hand at the loom along with his brother Bartolomeo, and even after he had gone to sea he assisted his father as journeyman, when a man was needed and he did not happen to be engaged. In 1472 he is still described in legal documents from Savona as a "weaver from Genoa." But he had no domicile either in Savona or Genoa. The family lived on very short commons, and the two elder sons were at a very early stage compelled to see about their "getting on" in both senses of the words.

It may be considered as out of the question that Christoforo

in his fourteenth year attended the famous university of Pavia and there received influences that afterwards proved decisive for his career. There is no room in his life for this. His vast learning, of which a universal genius like Alexander von Humboldt always spoke with the greatest admiration bears all too plainly the characteristic marks of self-education; the elementary foundations are wanting. In the year-long fight that he waged with so many scholars who reviled him as an ignorant dilettante and a half-crazy visionary, he never once appealed to an academic past. An anecdote told about his earliest boyhood throws some light on this subject. A professor of geography in Genoa had a great predilection for a certain kind of fish that could only be caught by special skill. The young lad from the Casa dell'olivello was extraordinarily clever in the exercise of this art, and every time he handed to the professor's wife in the kitchen a net filled with these delicacies, he was permitted as a reward to browse among the old books in the professor's library. In this way he is said to have laid the foundation of his rather undisciplined and indiscriminate book-learning. But this, too, is undoubtedly one of those *ben trovato* tales which a grateful posterity is accustomed to lay only on the graves of great men as a token of reverence and by way of reassuring proof that when all is said and done everything happened quite naturally and without any mystery.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

“**H**O there, Domenico! Fetch the wine! It’s a damnably hot day, and these shopkeepers, the Adornos, make one thirsty! We have thoroughly diddled them! Here’s luck to San Giorgio and Sforza!”

A mercenary wearing a short coat-of-mail threw his plumed hat on a table covered with spilt wine and bread-crumbs. A swarm of flies rose up buzzing viciously and fell noisily on the corner of the bench at the wall, above which, in front of a crucifix and a picture of the Madonna there was a tiny, sputtering oil-lamp of red glass which flared up and went out with a fetid curl of smoke.

Behind the counter the innkeeper Domenico Colombo, who had taken advantage of the twilight hour to enjoy a short dose, rose heavily and shuffled slowly up in his well-worn slippers. He gazed at his domineering guest half stupidly, half suspiciously with his rather glazed eyes from beneath his hairless, shining cranium. The stranger gave the table a crashing blow with the flat of his hand and laughed. “Don’t you know me at all? Look here!”—with that he shoved back the right sleeve of his doublet—“there’s the scar from the knife-thrust the treacherous Moor planted on me a year ago in your den! And now it will surely begin to dawn on you!”

The inn-keeper stared him in the face for a while without speaking; then he murmured slowly and evidently with very little pleasure: “Ah!—Tonio! Once more in Savona! I suppose you’ve been in the raid to day? Was there much blood spilt? Any dead? If only you brought us some peace in the end! We here are being starved by these perpetual civic brawls! We shall soon have no other guest but the bailiff!”

“Bring you peace?” roared the other. “Your titled gang in Genoa will have to be quiet at last! Sforza has the city in his power, and he won’t let it out of his claws. But you too are just a lot of shopkeepers and are in the same boat with the Adornos

and the Dorias, or whatever the pack is called. Why didn't you stay yonder? You would have messed your breeches for fear. There was a damnably sharp tussle round San Giorgio this week, and in your old suburb, too! We have been clearing up here in Savona since yesterday. We haven't copped too many, but a few heads will roll off. We'll soon make peace; trust me for that! And now fetch the wine and whatever you have of belly-timber!"

The innkeeper walked back to behind the counter with provoking leisureliness, shouted a few words through a small window that gave a view of the kitchen behind, brought out a bottle of red wine from beneath the counter, took from the shelf a tin beaker that was almost black and placed them both before his guest. Then he went across to the window and looked ill-humouredly down the narrow, gloomy street that ran straight up from the small harbour to his house.

"Can't you spare a candle any longer here?" sneered Tonio. "Your wine is still all right, but I don't want to swallow flies with it. And be a little smarter with the food. I'm hungry, and I've got money too." On that, with a purse-proud air, he slapped a pouch that hung from his belt. "Your old woman is surely not going about any longer?"

Domenico did not stir, and answered in an almost menacing tone: "We buried my old woman about Christmas—she couldn't face the misery any longer."

Tonio made a grimace by way of sympathy: "Ah—one can see at once that there's no woman about! That reminds me—your daughter asked me to remember her to you. I saw her on Saturday when she dragged her loafer of a husband from the wine-shop. You ought to have seen her! She's a lass of spirit! You ought to have her in the house with you! Your son-in-law's cheese-shop will soon be shut. But, of course, you know that already."

Domenico remained silent. Then suddenly the door was burst open and a boy of about six years, barefooted, in tattered and torn garments, bounced into the room and, frightened at the sight of the soldier, ran timidly up to his father and hid himself beneath his blue apron.

Tonio laughed. "Hullo, podgy! Here with your paw!," and he stretched out to the boy his heavy fist. Domenico pushed the boy forward. "Come, give Tonio your hand, Giacomo!"

he said sullenly; "he won't eat you." The youngster quickly put out his little hand towards the fist that tried to clutch it, and then he fled, as fast as he could run, out at the open door, almost between the legs of three fishermen who were just entering. The oldest of them, a grey-bearded man, threw a hasty glance of greeting at the soldier and motioned to his companions to sit down with him at a side table. That was as much as to say: "We would rather not have anything to do with him." And Domenico, after he had brought them wine, sat down beside them. An untidy maid brought the soldier his food, a capacious platter filled with macaroni with a lump of butter on it, a salad of green beans, cucumbers, and pumpkins, and a slice of bread. He gave her a sidelong look, puckered up his mouth and then devoured his meal with a ravenous appetite. She lit an oil-lamp that hung from the low, brown ceiling, and disappeared again into the kitchen at the back.

The three fishermen sipped their wine deliberately, murmuring a word now and again, as though they were afraid to disturb the stranger. The latter had finished his meal, washing it well down with a beaker of wine. Then he settled himself comfortably in his corner, giving at the same time a searching look at the men seated at the side-table. Then, beckoning to the inn-keeper he pointed to his empty bottle, and unbuckling his short sabre in order to be more at ease, he flung it on the bench with a clatter. Domenico brought him a second flask and now sat down facing him. His guest's ability to meet his bill had put him in a more amiable temper.

"Well, what about your glass?" asked Tonio.

Domenico shuffled once more to the counter, fetched a beaker for himself as well, larger than that of his guest, and filled it imperturbably. The mercenary snatched the glass away from him with a laugh and raised it, looking searchingly at his *vis-à-vis* as he did so. "Here's to Sforza! Look out, Domenico! We'll swill your wine and set your house on fire!" The other shrugged his shoulders, took the other beaker and clinked glasses. "Today Sforza—tomorrow who knows who?" he said with disdain; "the likes of us can't take sides. Everything is ruined with this perpetual brawling. Last year a bit of property I had in Genoa was put to the hammer.

"Oh, yes, my dear Domenico! Alive today, dead tomorrow. Cobbler stick to your last! You should have kept your few coppers

and had no dealings then with those swindling Greeks. They were smarter than you and not so lazy. But you have grown no leaner in spite of the bad times. You wanted to be a big man then and had visions of the palace in which you were one day to live. But just wait until your eldest son becomes a great man, like your swell relatives the two admirals. The younger Colombo is said to be hanging round here again. Don't you know to whom the three-master belongs that anchored yesterday morning half-way between here and Genoa? But Colombo is surely on the side of Sforza this time? Though one never knows what this man is going to do. Is your sly blade Christoforo with him on board after all?"

Domenico shook his head. "He was here for a night in April and went to Chios with two galleys loaded with wine. He meant to go to Cyprus, I think, and then back to Portugal. Heaven be praised he brings me a little money now and again—I can find use for it. I daresay you know that my second son, Bartolomeo, is also in Lisbon, and makes not a bad living by preparing charts. If only Christoforo, too, would settle down!"

"Why?" asked Tonio. "I liked the lad when I met him three years ago in Genoa. He's a dreamer too, but not such a brooder as you, who let your spirits droop whenever anything goes wrong with you. He hates the stuffy air of a room like the plague. Is he to grow to seed somewhere here at home? Think of all he has seen for his years! He is a born captain, today a merchant, tomorrow a soldier. And with it all never anything but a real saint, wearing his scapular under his sailor's shirt. But that's none of my business. Does he still browse among these old musty books whenever he can get the chance?"

Domenico shrugged his shoulders doubtfully. "What do I know? I can't make head or tail of him. He never says much. He has been reserved from his childhood, and since Bartolomeo has gone we have no definite news about him at all. According to the popular saying, Church, Sea, or Court are the three roads to fortune. I should have preferred him to remain in the Church; when he was younger there was no hauling him out of the cloisters. But this aimless shilly-shallying—at one time in the harbour, at another on shore—leads to nothing; up till now he hasn't gained much by it."

"A young man from Genoa and a monk! Don't make me laugh!" shouted Tonio. "And a fellow like him! Let him get



out into the world! He may be a little crack-brained, and if the Mediterranean is too small for him, some use can be found for people like him in Portugal. It's all up with Genoa in any case. There's nothing here but trading and haggling—it used to be different in bygone days. It's a shame we gave way before the Turks and that we no longer have any possession in the Black Sea!"

Domenico laughed. "There you see where that eternal squabbling has landed us! No ship is safe any longer ten leagues from land. The Mediterranean is a nest of robbers like the Abruzzi mountains, and the Moors are not the worst by a long chalk!"

"Rubbish!" shouted Tonio. "There must be war, else how could the likes of us live? We are all soldiers of fortune, on land or on sea! And your Christoforo is just such another, and so here's to him! Another bottle! And you over there can keep us company! Let's have a song! You used to strum the lute now and again, Domenico. Bring your kit!"

And now the inn-keeper too grew lively. He hobbled precipitately to the counter and brought an extra large bottle. The three fishermen needed no pressing to join them. The glasses were filled and Christoforo's health had just been drunk, when a shot was heard outside. "Devil take it!" cried Tonio, giving the table a blow with his fist that made the bottles dance. "I thought as much! There's something queer going on there!" And on that they heard the alarm sounded. Tonio sprang up, gulped down the rest of his wine, threw a few coins on the table, buckled on his side-arms again and ran out without a word. The other three also finished their drinks as quickly as possible and hurried away.

Domenico alone remained quietly sitting; he shook his head at their hurry, folded his hands on his belly, murmured a prayer, and it was a long time before the remainder of the two-quart bottle was gradually emptied to the last drop.

## CHAPTER IV

### SAILOR AND TRADER, SOLDIER AND PIRATE

**E**VEN in the eleventh century the Republic of Genoa was considered the Academy of nautical science and shipbuilding, and although its supremacy in the Mediterranean had passed to the Republic of San Marco after the destruction of its fleet by the Venetians on the 23rd of December 1379 at Chioggia, it was able to maintain its shipbuilding fame successfully. In a world which at that time was still so small, Genoese were in demand on every ship and in every seaport. The city existed on shipping and trade, inseparable twin industries, and that these were a source of immense wealth is shown by the enormous size of its severe, castle-like palaces.

For the young lads of Genoa the harbour was the epitome of all wonder and adventure and the natural scene of their boyish games. They grew up in the knowledge of the sailor's craft in the same way as the peasant's son on the land grew up in company with the indispensable horse and ass and mule. Already at the age of six they had their first experience of handling the oars themselves; and the boy who for the first time towed a yawl without assistance to the lighthouse at the point of the great mole moved among those of his own age with the halo of an expert, and talked of larboard and starboard, weather and lee, with the assurance of an old salt. Everyone had a brother or some other relative at sea, a grandfather who had been drowned in the Dardanelles, a cousin who had just recently escaped with his life at Corsica, or an uncle who had gone off to Africa in a Portuguese hip belonging to Henry the Navigator and had been missing for years, perhaps had been devoured by cannibals, his widow and children receiving a bare subsistence from their relatives. The sea was the element in which they lived, and anyone still youthful who had to stay at home in a dull, musty workshop or office felt himself more or less a cripple and a stepchild of fortune.

And yet the sailor's calling was never free from danger, although, as a rule, the scene of his labours was the comparatively

small Mediterranean Sea. The art of cartography was still in its infancy, all the data were lacking for a systematic, scientific investigation of depths and currents and for their permanent record on trustworthy nautical charts. Even sketches of the coastlines that were comparatively accurate were of rare occurrence. The compass had been in use for centuries, but the art of determining positions with the help of the quadrant and the astrolabe, and the measurement of star-angles was the secret of a few "astronomers" who readily took the credit of being magicians and who dealt out their scanty knowledge in a very thrifty fashion. Astronomy and astrology with their tangle of deep-rooted superstitions were not as yet distinguished from one another; scholars who knew better stayed at home. Seamen found their bearings with the help of certain landmarks, and therefore were very reluctant to sail for any distance out of sight of the coast, fleeing to the nearest harbour at the approach of a storm and coming to anchor at night. Even the pilot or steersman felt himself entirely dependent on wind and weather, and when a storm drove his ship out of the usual course, he was pretty helpless until land was sighted again that seemed familiar to him, or that offered him an anchorage until he could discover his position with the help of the inhabitants. A seaman's efficiency consisted then far more than today in his physical strength, his powers of endurance, his familiarity with the handling of sails and his courage. That precisely was the attraction of life at sea.

The political insecurity was a far more serious affair. The Mediterranean was the arena of the surrounding Great Powers and of the innumerable Italian petty states. They raided the merchant ships of their opponents for their own profit or, as *condottieri* of the sea, they took toll now from the one, now from the other of the warring parties and were hardly to be distinguished from professional sea-robbers like the Moors, the Kabyles and the Arabs. The trading ship had also to be a man-of-war, both for purposes of defence and attack, and the seaman became a soldier as soon as a foreign craft, either under an enemy flag or under no flag at all, appeared on the horizon. "Sailor" was almost synonymous with "pirate," and in all likelihood Columbus passed through this stern school.

Among these *condottieri* of the sea, who, either serving one power or other, today Naples, the next day France, or acting on their own account in the Mediterranean or on the west coast

as far up as Flanders and England, made that much-frequented trade highway unsafe by their filibustering and piratical forays, were two famous or notorious men—the elder and the younger Colombo. They sprang from the ancient Genoese nobility, and bore the title of “Admiral” either as a reward for services rendered to France or as a self-conferred honour. Columbus occasionally boasted of his relationship with them: “I am not the first admiral of our family”—a proof that their trade of robbery as confederates of this prince or the other was held to be entirely honourable. Whether this relationship was due to his imagination, or to a desire to add distinction to his family tree, or even to the legal claim made by Spain to the New World, which an historian of that period called Oviedo traced to the year 1658 B.C., this at least is certain that after the death of Columbus it was positively asserted in several quarters that he was with the younger Colombo “for a considerable time” on a filibustering expedition. As this admiral had also the Christian name Cristoforo, Columbus has even been often mistaken for him. Certainly no one has adduced proof for this assertion. If it is correct, then he may well have taken part in attacks on Spanish ships and therefore may have afterwards had a twofold reason for drawing a veil so carefully over this period of his past that for the decade 1460–1470 there is no indication even of his existence. There is only a single reference to that period. It also places him in warlike surroundings and this recollection for once in a way is supplied by himself! On his second voyage of discovery in January 1494 he wrote a letter from Haiti to the Spanish royal consorts, which according to the statement of his son Fernando and of Bishop Lascasas, who said he had seen the document, contains the following curious story:

“I had the good fortune to be sent by King René (now at rest in God) to Tunis to capture the galley *Ferdinandina*. When I reached the island of San Pietro at the south-west of Sardinia, we discovered that the enemy galley was accompanied by three other ships, one smaller and two larger. For that reason my crew fell into such dismay that they resolved to return to Marseilles in order to get a second ship and more men. As I saw no means of compelling them I acted as though I had yielded to their wish. In reality I altered the compass and had all sails set. It was already evening and on the following morning we had Cape Carthagea well behind us, while the crew thought we were sailing to Marseilles.”

How the affair turned out is not known. It may have taken place in the year 1465, when King René of Anjou attempted once more—as he had already done two years before—to wrest Naples from King Ferdinand of the house of Arragon. His son, John II of Calabria, was commander-in-chief of this expedition, and Genoa was his ally. It was a matter therefore of capturing a galley, in all likelihood Neapolitan, which lay or cruised off the north coast of Africa near Tunis, and Columbus—at that time seventeen years old—was singled out for the task. Several historians for that reason have rejected the whole story as imported fiction, while others make it the reason for putting the birth-year of their hero further back. Certainly it sounds incredible at first hearing that a youth of seventeen should be in command of a galley, and that a crew acquainted with the sea should allow themselves to be deceived in this way. But without doubt it was a question of making a bold attack for which volunteers were asked, who were impelled by daring or ambition to distinguish themselves. No enquiries about age would be made, the sole condition would be whether the steersman who offered for service was able to command a ship; and Columbus, who moreover always looked older than his years, must have had this reputation, especially since he was given the order to undertake this expedition in so offhand a fashion. There is nothing so very strange in his having hoodwinked the crew. They were no doubt soldiers, for the work for which they had been chosen was admittedly military, and although they were not altogether unacquainted with the sea—in the belief that they were returning to Marseilles they had probably taken a nap. Besides it was at night and quite dark on deck, for ships on account of the danger of fire carried only a lantern on the poop, and a war-ship which did not wish to be seen would have all lights out. The handful of men whom the pilot required to manage the sails during the voyage at night were probably fellow-conspirators who agreed with him that the clear order of the captain was to be carried out at all costs. Perhaps the crew were justified in their opposition, for they found themselves unexpectedly faced with a superior force; but after all what command in these circumstances was likely to be obeyed? No doubt the story offers many points of attack to critical scrutiny. But occasional recollections of this kind are scarcely ever extant in a form that is proof against a fundamentally suspicious criticism. Some fact or other is omitted because, at the time the incident is

related, it seems to be a matter of course, and afterwards it turns out that with it the main prop of the whole structure is missing. The anecdote gives evidence of courage, determination, devotion to duty and a certain craftiness—qualities which Columbus also showed in later years. That his native city itself gave him credit for these qualities indispensable for military tasks is shown by its entrusting him with the command of several galleys which were sent to the island of Cyprus on the occasion of a brush with Venice. It is even asserted that on another occasion, when in the service of Louis XI of France, as captain of Genoese ships, he had actually to make an attack on two Spanish galleys.

But that was in the seventies, and we have better information about those years. It is well established that Columbus came to Portugal in 1470. The adventure of his first landing there as it is depicted by his son and first biographer is nevertheless a clumsy invention. Admiral Colombo the younger is said to have lain in wait between Cape Vicente, the south-west point of Portugal, and Lisbon, for four Venetian vessels that came from Flanders with a valuable cargo. He got the worst of the fight, however. The vessels that were attacked defended themselves, the opposing ships bound together by grappling irons were set on fire and the crews had to leap overboard. Columbus is said to have been among them, and supported by an oar to have escaped in an exhausted condition by swimming to the shore two leagues distant. A raid of this kind on four Venetian merchant vessels did actually become famous on account of the daring action of the pirates, unusual even for those days, but unfortunately for the recorder of this incident it did not take place until 1485, when Columbus had left Portugal again and had gone to Spain. Similar sea-fights are likely to have happened often enough on this ocean highway, and as the nucleus of this romantic tale there remains only the conjecture that Columbus may as a matter of fact have been rescued on the Portuguese coast after being shipwrecked. Since he was inclined from his earliest years to look on such events as the result of higher guidance, he may have been led by his miraculous escape to consider Portugal as the country in which he was now meant to settle. He went to Lisbon where there were many Genoese, for that capital was the universal exchange for seafarers and adventurers. Reckless dare-devils who would stick at nothing were in request there, and the highest flight of their ambition was to rest on their laurels after years of

storm, and rule like a petty pasha as governor of some island or other.

In Lisbon Columbus found acquaintances who came from his native city. His brother Bartolomeo had also settled there or had followed him to that city, where he supported himself by map-drawing. Columbus, too, made a living by this art when sailing and trade failed. It is certain that he was able to combine both. He was connected with several large trading firms, and he always showed an expert knowledge of commercial undertakings. In the service of one or other of these wholesale merchants he now made numerous voyages that took him to every corner of the Mediterranean Sea and also made him accurately acquainted with the west coast of Europe. He gathered the material for his nautical charts from his own observations. It was his custom to make notes of all the coasts that he saw, and he elaborated his sketches during his periods of leisure in Lisbon. These coast-charts, owing to their accuracy, found a ready sale among all the captains. Every sailor in those days could speak a broken Portuguese, but Columbus learned the language so well that very soon those who heard him speak no longer took him for a foreigner, and in order to mix with the Portuguese as a fellow-countryman he took henceforward the name of Christobal Columbo.

It can be proved that in 1474 he visited the island of Chios which at that time was a Genoese possession, and also that he made a voyage in the Mediterranean in the following year with a load of wine to some unknown port. His occasional appearances in Savona at the house of his father whom he supported, are therefore easily accounted for. From the island of Chios there was exported the gum of the mastic tree, a valuable condiment used by apothecaries, bakers and drysalters. After seeing in later years the magnificent, and much taller, mastic trees of the newly discovered Antilles he was accustomed to contrast them with the far scantier products of Chios. He refers to this in his diary on the 12th November and 11th December 1492. He was acquainted with the Greek Islands, the Levant and the north coast of Africa. The island of Cuba when he set foot on it for the first time on the 28th of October 1492, reminded him of Sicily; every voyage to the East had taken him past this island. Specially copious are his recollections of Guinea, the colonial domain of Portugal, which he must often have visited, of course on board Portuguese vessels, for this region was forbidden ground to all others. Unless on

board a Portuguese ship no one could have reached the "Gold Coast" and the fortified settlement of San Jorge de la Mina, which he also visited. As this fort was only built in 1481, at least one of his voyages to Guinea on which he no doubt regularly put in at Madeira and the Canary Islands, must have taken place in this or in one of the following years. In order to put the value of his own discoveries in the proper light he compared them freely with what he had seen in Guinea. There was absolutely no comparison with the climate of the Antilles and the "pestilential vapours" of Africa; the yam, which is the chief food of the Indians of Haiti was much better flavoured there than in Guinea, the harbours were immeasurably better, the palms in Cuba incomparably finer and higher. (Diary on 28th October, 27th November, 16th and 21st December 1492). On the 8th of January 1493 he noticed three sirens on the north coast of Haiti, large water-mammals whose heads when seen from a distance had some resemblance to those of human beings; these too he had seen before in Namegueta in Guinea.

What did Columbus do in Guinea? He sailed on merchant ships, part of whose cargo consisted of negroes. On this point too he makes an unambiguous statement in his diary. "It was frequently my task," he says under the date of 12th November 1492, "to bring negroes from Guinea to Portugal in order that they might learn Portuguese." Interpreters must have been trained in this way in order to facilitate intercourse between the natives and their Portuguese conquerors. But that was not the end of the matter. "Black ivory" too had a market. Numerous slave-ships sailed between Guinea and Portugal and man-hunting was a new sport. This was not approved officially, but it was nevertheless allowed. That Portuguese settlement is still called at the present day the "Gold- and Slave-Coast." Throughout the whole of Portugal, Moors and negroes, "black and white negroes" had long existed as serfs, servants and labourers, and no questions were asked as to where they came from. Now and again the queens of those times in their goodness of heart were troubled about their fate, with exactly as much effect as the queens of a later date had who interested themselves in the poor. The slaves remained slaves, the poor went on hungering for a square meal. Only a very small minority of humanitarians, who naturally did not understand politics and "business," took objection to this traffic.



Columbus was not unacquainted even with the North. He was in England and utilized the opportunity of visiting Iceland from that country. In a treatise on the "five inhabitable zones" he relates: "In the month of February 1477 I sailed for more than a hundred leagues beyond Thule. The English, especially the inhabitants of Bristol, go with their wares to this island, which is as large as England. When I stayed there the sea was not frozen, but the ebb and flow there are so great, that at every tide the sea rises and falls twenty-six fathoms. The Thule of which Ptolemy speaks lies where he says it does and is called Friesland today." He evidently sailed past the Faroe Islands, which the great Egyptian geographer of the second century Ptolemy of Alexandria calls Thule, to Iceland, the real "ultima Thule," the last inhabitable part of the earth, so far as it was then known. The remarkably precise description Columbus gives of the exact situation of the island is surprisingly incorrect. For that reason this account, too, has been doubted and declared fictitious. But it has first to be proved that his figures, which are certainly not very exact and rather exaggerated, are actually to be found in his manuscript, and in regard to one point the acute investigation of a Norwegian scholar has fallen out surprisingly in favour of Columbus, and of the reliability of his statements: the winter of 1476-77 in Iceland was actually so mild that as early as March the northern part of the island was free from snow. Certainly it is impossible that the polar ice can have withdrawn so far from the north coast as Columbus asserts. A later marginal note either by himself or his brother in one of the books of his library, the *Imago mundi* of Cardinal d'Ailly, reduces the "hundred leagues" to "a day's sail."

He was also at home, and this time in the literal sense of the word, among the islands off the west coast belonging to Portugal. For some time after his return from England and Iceland he had married and was therefore evidently earning enough to support a family. When he was in Lisbon he used to attend Mass in the cloister of All Saints in that city, and there the fate befel him that meant either weal or woe for so many romantic heroes of the Latin countries: he fell in love with a young lady, who attracted his notice during the service. As very often happened he made her acquaintance at the basin of consecrated water, and married her. She was called Felipa Monis de Perestrello, and was the daughter of a man, also of Italian birth, who had entered the

Portuguese service, colonized the island of Porto Santo near Madeira and ruled it for a long time as governor; it had belonged to the Portuguese since 1419. His widow lived in Lisbon with this daughter, and Columbus experienced family life here for the first time. His wife's sister still lived in Porto Santo as the spouse of the governor at that time, and the newly wedded pair often visited there. Columbus' first son Diego was born at Porto Santo. As to the date of his birth nothing is known, for complete darkness enshrouds these domestic details. The Perestrellos were a highly esteemed family of noble birth and were certainly well-to-do. It is surprising that the mother gave her prompt consent to the courtship of an alien of unknown origin and uncertain future, a penniless man and one of the proletariat despite his good manners. It also seems that his pecuniary circumstances were in no way bettered by his marriage. The conjecture cannot be dismissed that Felipa was an illegitimate child, and that any sort of provision at all for her maintenance would be welcomed. The Portuguese investigators have sought in vain for her name in the genealogical tables of the Perestrellos. Columbus himself in his letters or in his diaries, so far as we know them, never mentions the mother of his first son, and as he left Portugal in company with him alone, it may be assumed that she was already dead at that time. It is also not impossible that the spouses were separated after a short time as the result of his restless, wandering life, of his perpetual brooding over problems which every year engrossed him more and more, and of his consequent neglect of those dearest to him. The indissolubility of a Catholic marriage would therefore no doubt have been the reason for his not having afterwards made the mother of his second son Fernando his legal wife.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PLUNGE INTO THE VOID

THE brain of humanity is far more forgetful than that of individual human beings. The ancient Phœnicians and Carthaginians, above all the Greeks and Romans, knew infinitely more about the shape of the earth than the whole millennium before the birth of Columbus. Among thoughtful people of the time of Ptolemy in the second century A.D. only a few doubted any longer that the earth was a globe. As early as the fourth century before our era the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle had adduced in proof of this that the same elephants were to be found on the Atlas mountains on the north-west coast of Africa as in India. He was thinking therefore of a former connection between Africa and the east coast of Asia beyond the Atlantic Ocean. Ptolemy also considered the latter a sea bounded by those two coasts. But Ptolemy and Aristotle grossly underestimated the immense distance between the two shores, they reckoned the circumference of the globe as a sixth part too small, and according to their conception the earth was the centre of the cosmos, while centuries before them the Pythagoreans had taught the doctrine of the rotation of the stars round a "central fire." A thousand years after the Pythagoreans, orthodox humanity regarded the angels as the stage-managers of the cosmos, who looked after the great and small celestial lights and in dark night rolled the sun back again to its starting-point over unseen cloudy ways. The earth was simply a disc which some rash spirits believed they might consider as round because the Bible spoke about a "circle of the earth," while the sky covered the earth like a glass bell. The advance of astronomical science until the time of Copernicus is to be sought for in the reverse direction.

The Occident first recovered the geographical and other knowledge of antiquity in a roundabout way through Arabic, and the rule of the Moors in Spain from the eighth to the fifteenth century fertilized the culture of the whole of Europe. The invasion of the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

extended the geographical knowledge of the earth far more widely than the Crusades, and daring travellers like Marco Polo, a Sven Hedin of the thirteenth century, pushed on as far as China, Japan and Hindustan. Even in 1220 the works of Aristotle were burned as heretical in the Paris Sorbonne, and anyone who had a copy of them in his possession had also to look forward to being burned at the stake if he were caught red-handed. They did not become the favourite reading of the clergy until St. Thomas Aquinas began to take a liking for them and expound them. But even the knowledge of the Greek language had all but died out, and it was humanism, supported by the art of printing, that first re-opened the treasure-houses of antiquity. Columbus was four years old when Gutenberg invented his movable types in Mayence. But advance was slow; the very network of veins needed for the diffusion of culture had first to be formed. In the fifteenth century scarcely any scholars continued to deny the spherical form of the earth. Yet the number of scholars was very small, and there were still many of them who were quite unable to free themselves from the hitherto accepted notion that there must be somewhere a highest point from which the waters flow down. The great Italian Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* gave many a reader unchristian delight, wrote a special treatise against that false conception. The theory of the earth's spherical shape was allowed to pass muster, but anyone even among scholars who followed it out to its practical conclusions found his brain reeling, while for the mass of people to speak of a terrestrial sphere, the force of gravitation and the antipodes was simply to deal in magic and do the work of the devil, and they would cross themselves to defend themselves against it.

But in this night of the darkest Middle Ages there are flashes now and then, crackling meteors that burst with lightning-like splendour in the ether and St. Elmo flames that dance on unseen masts. These are the thoughts of seers and poets and the lore of antiquity which, coming to life in them again, goes pulsing through the centuries in immaterial waves. Myths and sagas are handed down from one generation to the following, from one century to the next, and this music rings out ceaselessly in a swelling choral song through ages that scarcely know any other expression for their experiences and their visions, their dreams, and their hopes, than perpetual oral tradition. Even geography became a myth. We shall likely never know whether the ancient Carthaginians

had already discovered America. But the saga tells of people who came over in their ships from a land far away in the West in order to see the home of their ancestors, who had emigrated in days of yore. The myth of the lost continent of Atlantis rises from the depths of the sixth century B.C. The islands of the Azores had been already visited by the Carthaginians, the Arabs and the Normans, and the Canary Isles by the Phœnicians. They got lost again in the ocean, but the saga did not forget them and told of pious Christians, who under the leading of their bishop, on the invasion of Spain by the Moors, took refuge on a large island in the world-ocean, the island of the Seven Cities, and Antilia became the fairy name for every Fata Morgana that voyagers along the coast saw on the western horizon. In 1344 the Canary Islands and in 1431 the Azores were found again by Portuguese seamen; the mirage was now a tangible reality and the western ocean was strewn with fixed and floating, but unapproachable islands about which popular poets wove their legends. He was a poor seaman and a coward who had never tried to get near the Isle of St. Brandan. When work on deck was over for a while, and the long tedious hours made even the taciturn loquacious, when fancy began to glow in the darkness of the night or in the unlit cabin, there was none so blind as not to have caught sight, on one or other of his voyages, of mysterious islands that suddenly disappeared again in the deep or receded farther and farther into the distance.

Columbus grew up in this world of sailors' sagas, and his temperament, inclined to accept miracles and thirsting for wonders, gave free scope to dreams like these. Every old salt vied with the other in palming off on the rising generation the biggest lies imaginable; his own invention was not sufficient for this, and accordingly he had in the last resort to fall back on the tales his far-travelled comrades had to tell of their out-of-the-way experiences. And a scarlet thread ran through them all: the idea of tracts of land in the distant West, which the eye instinctively sought when it scanned the horizon. How often Columbus must have stood on board his ship or on the beach at Porto Santo and Madeira and gazed pensively at the sea! But if anyone asked him whether he was seeing ghosts or wanted to discover such and such an island, he would shake his head in angry denial. He was more concerned to learn about the strange objects which storms and currents washed up here and there on the beach, or about the

articles which mariners said they had fished up on the voyage to the Azores: bamboo canes of such a size and strength as had never been seen on the coast of Africa, tree-trunks of a quite unknown species, blocks of wood artistically carved with a tool that could not have been made of iron. In Flores, the extreme western outpost of the Azores, bodies with features of a quite strange race were said to have been floated ashore. Even boats, it was said, had been seen which were manned by people belonging to an utterly foreign tribe. Was there anybody who could give him more precise information about these things, was there anyone who had seen them himself? But most of these events had happened a long time before, and the sailor who had fished out the bamboo canes had been for years a slave among the Kabyles, and he was not likely to get home again since he was a poor wretch and there was no one to pay a ransom for him. But why did he want to know all that? It was quite true about the old rubbish; only the week before, the last bit had been thrown into the fire. The settlers on these islands—the pioneers sent there were nearly all hardened criminals—were not collectors, and they would only have laughed at the idea of an ethnological museum. Their business was to destroy the ancient indigenous cultures root and branch, for the original inhabitants of these islands lying off the west coast of Europe were for the most part brave people who disputed with the foreign conquerors every inch of their soil.

The knowledge of the spherical shape of the earth must have come as a surprise to the Genoese weaver's son at some time or other in his youth, and with it like a flash of lightning was linked the conclusion: if the earth is round and supports human beings as it does on the hitherto known surface of the sphere from the Azores to the farthest coast of Asia, which travellers like Marco Polo had visited, then a ship that continued to sail straight West through the Straits of Gibraltar, the "Pillars of Hercules" of the ancient Greeks and Romans, would land at that same coast of the gold lands in the far East. This idea sank deep into his mind, and when he looked over the sea in that direction on his voyage along the west coast, the black silhouette of this ship was always before his eyes, hovering on the horizon with its billowing sails and simply completing the line in a westward direction that had long been drawn towards the East. There on the coast of Cathay (China) over which Marco Polo had journeyed, the circle must close. How far might that possibly be?

But when he dropped a hint of this to his comrades on board, they would clutch their heads and stare at him amazed and horrified. How, they would ask, could a seaman like him harbour such a mad idea? Who could tell him whether the sea farther on would be able to carry the ship—whether it wouldn't let it plunge into the void? Only visionaries and dreamers could come by such brain-scorching ideas! And yet he was such a practical fellow! Surely he knew that a ship would be lost, that there would be no longer any coast to fall back on for drinking-water, and no one could swallow sea water! And what would happen in a storm? And what if the ocean beyond the horizon was a chaos of cliffs? A ship voyaged to a fixed point, and not at random! And then his companions would shake their heads compassionately, tap their foreheads with their forefingers and rock with laughter. In that way he learned to keep silent about the ideas that pursued him and allowed him no rest. But his secret search took him always in the one direction, and one day the answer came unexpectedly as he was reading, faithful to his pious habit, in the Book of Books, and the words of Isaiah for the first time flamed up before him as if in letters of fire: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered nor come to mind!" A shiver passed over him as though an unseen hand had touched him. He now read the Bible line by line, from end to end with feverish zeal and everywhere he found in its prophets dark hints regarding this new earth, from the ends of which hymns of praise were to ring out among the heathen in honour of the Righteous One, and from the heavens which throughout all are the Lord's. And linked with this were his youthful memories from the cloisters of the Franciscans and the Dominicans who proclaimed the Word of God among the heathen, and above all of the resonant voice of the missionary preacher in the Church of San Matteo in Genoa, with its accusation and exhortation: "And still the Holy Sepulchre is in the hands of the infidels!" The hymn of praise did not ring out yet among the heathen as the prophet proclaimed. The western world had grown slothful in the service of God, its powers were crippled and its means wasted in worldliness. Whoever possessed those gold lands in the East would be able to give assistance, and the sacred prophecies would be fulfilled, before the Day of Judgment broke and brought Christendom to account!

Although it was the Bible that thus set before him his great aim—which he nevertheless kept sealed in his bosom and did not confide to anyone—still philosophy often had a higher value for frivolous humanity, and for that reason he began to search in it for confirmation of what had come to him from spiritual lore and had grown into a central core of sombre, devout and obstinate belief. He read whatever he could lay hands on and whatever promised to give him enlightenment. He was like a magnet that attracted every particle of iron. At an early date the astonishing prophecy of a Roman poet, Seneca, must have come under his notice. This occurs in his tragedy the *Medea* and Columbus himself wrote it in his copy of Pliny's *Natural History*: "Centuries will come when the Ocean shall burst the bands with which it encompasses us, a limitless land will make its appearance and the steersman will discover a new world, and Thule will no longer be the farthest point of the known earth." That was the voice of a biblical prophet from the lips of a heathen! And from the day on which he learned that clear-headed thinkers of antiquity, instead of dreading the "Dark Sea" of the West had already calmly measured it, that Aristotle, Ptolemy and other philosophers had found the circumference of the globe by no means so enormous as had been imagined, that only a seventh part of it was covered with water, as had already been affirmed in the Creation story, and that the width of the ocean must be more limited than had hitherto been assumed—then the task to which he believed he had been called, and to which only a chosen person could have been called, lay before him in well-defined outlines. What no one before him had attempted—he meant to accomplish! A kingdom—untold kingdoms for a ship, a single ship!

He certainly had ready access to the libraries of the monasteries, but the systematic study of manuscripts hard to decipher was beyond him, he had neither sufficient acquaintance with Latin nor the necessary mental discipline, and, moreover he had not the time for it; that was taken up with the struggle for existence. Printed literature began to be disseminated but slowly, and when in later days, condemned to wait idly in Spain, he supported himself by the sale of broad-sheets and popular books, it may be assumed that his own desire for reading made him pretty familiar with this trade. He himself gathered the information which he now compiled from various Church Fathers, whose



writings an obliging monk gave him in secret, but mostly from comprehensive works that were intended for a wider reading public. Even the book which afterwards was like a new Evangel for him, the *Imago mundi* (image of the world) of the French Cardinal d'Ailly, was only an indiscriminate compilation of cosmographical literature, and most likely reached his hands only after his plan had been fixed and he had long been struggling to carry it out, for the first edition of this work which was published in Latin did not appear until 1480 or 1485. It fired his zeal and braced his energy, but it did not give him the decisive impulse.

Moreover, any quotations from ancient authors we find in the writings of Columbus are in very few cases culled at first hand from his reading of the authors themselves. Among his posthumous documents there were found papers in which he had noted everything that he regarded as illustrating his conception of the earth, but these papers belong to a later period. Marco Polo is also mentioned in them in addition to Pliny, Plutarch and the *Imago mundi* of Cardinal d'Ailly. The famous account of his travels, strange to say, did not appear in German until 1477, and Columbus certainly did not know that language. A Latin edition followed in 1490, the Italian edition in 1496. But Marco Polo's travel-tales had long been universally known through numerous widely diffused manuscript copies and through oral transmission. They were current in Venice and no doubt also in Genoa, where Marco Polo was a prisoner of war in 1298 and where he wrote these recollections. He was certainly considered—though for the most part wrongly—as the Münchhausen of his age, a liar in the grand style, and for a long time after his death (1323) no carnival in Venice was complete without a masker who represented “Messer Marco Millione,” that impostor and devil of a fellow, and who amused the populace in the San Marco piazza with improvising Gargantuan lies. For this very reason Columbus has—with one exception—scrupulously avoided citing the statements of the Venetian. With only a smattering of scholarship himself he was unwilling to expose himself to attack by quoting so unreliable a witness. But everywhere in the New World his constant aim was simply to re-discover the romantic wonders of the farthest East which Marco Polo had described. Columbus was also acquainted with the narratives of the Englishman John Mandeville, who travelled about in the East for thirty-four years from 1327 onwards and who even said he had served

the Grand Khan in Cathay. In reality, however, he never got beyond Egypt, and in this clever compilation of travel-stories he plundered the writings of his predecessors with unexampled impudence, ascribing their adventures to himself. That naturally made his book so entertaining and exciting that it was far more widely read than Marco Polo's.

On the whole, Columbus at that time had a very meagre knowledge of books. All the greater was his practical experience. He knew how to look with open eyes, learned more from people than from books and possessed a gift for making observations that was quite unusual for those times. He not only scrutinized the external outlines of things, but, despite the many errors and misunderstandings that crept into his comparisons, he brought them into vital relationship with one another, and his descriptive accounts of the countries he discovered are the first examples of a profound feeling for nature and an awakening appreciation of beauty in landscape. He had the mind of a philosopher and endeavoured to understand the essential significance of creation, and later he was quite alive to the fact that from childhood onwards he had in this way been groping his way through the world of appearance. On one occasion he expresses himself on this subject in a paper written in 1505, which was intended for the Spanish monarchs and which was part of the sketch of an unfinished work, his *Book of Prophecies*. In this he sums up his life with charming frankness, as Alexander von Humboldt says, and surrenders himself completely to his mystical theology. "In my earliest youth," he writes there, "I went to sea and I have continued my sea voyages until this present day. Anyone who applies himself to the exercise of this art will desire to fathom the secrets of this sublunary world. I have therefore occupied myself with this for more than fifty years now. Wherever man has fared on the waters of the ocean I have been there also. I was in constant communication with men learned in science, both clerical and lay, Latins and Greeks, Jews and Arabs and with innumerable other sects. The Lord was favourably inclined towards my striving to fulfil this desire (to understand the world). He gave me talents, He gave me insight. He lavished upon me in overflowing fulness a knowledge of nautical science; of astronomical science He gave me as much as I required; likewise of geometry and arithmetic. Moreover He gave me understanding and skill in the drawing of maps and enabled me to record the

correct positions of cities, rivers and mountains. During that whole time I have studied all kinds of writings—works of history, chronicles, books on philosophy and on other branches of knowledge into which God the Lord gave me insight. Plainly guided by His arm I went by ship from here to India. He gave me the will to accomplish this, and I came at that time to your majesties with the burning desire to reach my goal. All who learned of my plan questioned its feasibility and made merry at my expense. All the knowledge of which I have spoken was of no avail to me. Your majesties alone remained firm and unflinching, and for this clear foresight that illumined the rulers of Castile and did not leave me in the lurch to whom other can thanks be given than to the Holy Ghost?”

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EXPERT

THERE is scarcely any great idea that has not had a long previous history. It is like a tree whose roots strike deep into the centuries and gather strength from them to develop at length into a trunk. But these roots themselves have branched out beneath the earth and thrust themselves upwards at different places and thus it comes about that a great invention or discovery has been contrived, planned and prepared for accomplishment simultaneously by several persons, until someone suddenly gives it life and shape.

Now at that time there lived in Florence a famous physician, natural philosopher and cosmographer by name of Paolo Toscanelli (1397-1482) who was in epistolary communication with the outstanding scholars of all nations. This Florentine savant had occasion on the 25th June 1474 to send the following significant letter to his relative Cardinal Fernando Martinez in Lisbon, the father-confessor of King Alfonso:

"To Canon Fernando Martinez at Lisbon the physician Paolo sends greeting.

"It has been all the more agreeable to me to receive information of your confidential intercourse with his Majesty the King, since I spoke to you formerly of a shorter sea-route to the spice-lands than that by way of Guinea. The King desires from me an explanation still more convincing by ocular demonstration, so that the least skilled may be able to grasp and understand this route.

"Although the information you wish to obtain can be better shown on a sphere representing the earth, yet as being easier to understand and causing less trouble, I have resolved to illustrate the route on a sea-chart. I therefore send His Majesty a map sketched by my own hand on which your coasts and islands are marked from which the route towards the West begins and also the places that will then be reached. I indicate, besides, the distance that has to be kept from the North Pole or the equator

and where, *i.e.* after how many leagues, those regions are to be found that are richest in spices and precious stones. And do not be astonished if I call that territory where the spices are to be found 'western,' while it is usually described as eastern. On this route towards the West, however, those regions are to be found by voyages across the lower portion of the earth, although they have hitherto been sought by land and by the route eastwards across the upper portion of the earth. Accordingly the vertical lines distributed over the whole map show the distances from East to West, and the horizontal lines the distances from South to North. I have, however, noted on the map the different localities, which, according to the reliable information of sailors, you will be able to reach; in the first place for the reason that as the result of adverse winds or some other mischance a landing might have to be made at another place than the one originally intended, and in the second place in order that the mariners in question may be able to show the inhabitants of these coasts that they bring with them some previous knowledge of their land, a thing which will be all to the good. Only traders live on these islands. Indeed it is asserted that in Saiton, the most famous of the harbours of that region, more merchant-ships are to be found than in all the rest of the world. Each year a hundred large ships are said to set out from this harbour with pepper, in addition to the rest of the vessels which carry other spices.

"The mainland is densely populated; it is divided into provinces, petty states and countless cities and is ruled by a prince called the Grand Khan, which signifies King of Kings. His seat and residence is chiefly in the province of Cathay. His predecessors at one time wished to enter into friendly intercourse with the Christians; two hundred years ago they sent ambassadors to the Pope, who were to request him to send teachers back with them, so that they might be instructed in the Christian faith. But these ambassadors encountered obstacles while on the way and they turned back again. One actually did reach Pope Eugenius, however, and assured him of the great friendship his fellow-countrymen had for the Christians. I myself had a long conversation with this man concerning various matters, the size of their royal palaces, the breadth and prodigious length of their rivers and the multitude of cities on their banks. It is said that on one of these rivers alone about two hundred cities are situated, with large and broad marble bridges adorned throughout with

pillars. The Latin nations would find it to their advantage to search for this country, for they may gain there gold, silver, precious stones and spices, which would otherwise never reach us! The country also possesses many outstanding men, philosophers, astrologers and other scholars, who are masters of all the arts and are expert in government and military service.

"From Lisbon in a straight line towards the West extending to the large and magnificent city of Quinsay there are on the map twenty-six sections each 250 leagues in breadth. Quinsay (now Hankow on the east coast of China) is a hundred leagues in circumference and has ten marble bridges. The name signifies 'Heavenly City' and marvellous tales are told of the number of its artists and their incomes. The whole distance amounts almost to a third part of the entire earth. Quinsay is in the province of Mangi, next to the province of Cathay, where the capital of the ruler of the land is situated.

"From the island of Antilia, also unknown, which you call the Isle of the Seven Cities, to the far-famed island of Cipango (Japan) there are ten sections (2500 leagues). This island is immensely rich in gold, pearls and precious stones and its temples and palaces are roofed with pure gold.

"The way thither is still unknown, as are also all these routes by sea, but one is certain to arrive there. I could say a great deal more on this subject, but since I have already given you an account of it by word of mouth, and since you are thoroughly conversant with it, I shall not enlarge on it further. What I have written above may suffice as an answer to your question, when you take into account the short time at my disposal and my former labours. I remain at all times at His Majesty's command."

There was therefore in Florence a famous scholar who had at his command all that was to be known on this subject. He had for years been occupied with the plan of a westerly route towards the East, one on the "under part of the earth" as he calls it instead of the usual one on the upper part, and he had arrived at the same results as his obscure fellow-countryman in Genoa, of whose existence he had no idea. Toscanelli had certainly read Aristotle, Ptolemy and the rest for the most part in the original and from his reading he had come to form the same conception of the earth as Columbus. He saw everything so clearly before him that he went a step further and without ado drew a map of the other side of the world as carefully furnished

with degrees of latitude and longitude as though he had photographed it from an aeroplane. With an assurance surprising in a scholar he announces: "It is so many leagues to the city of Quinsay, or to the island of Cipango, the voyage thither is the easiest thing in the world; you cannot go wrong!" Toscanelli had as little, as the Genoese, the idea of discovering unknown countries. He is simply showing the king of Portugal the shortest trade-route to India, a route which was much more convenient than the more tedious and longer way round the south point of Africa, which had hitherto been sought for in vain. In 1474 the Portuguese, although they had already crossed the equator, had not forced their way farther south than Cape Lopez. Toscanelli knows exactly what Marco Polo relates of the fairy lands of the East, although he does not mention this authority by name. No doubt the cosmographer had seen in a library in Florence one of the manuscripts of Polo's book, which were circulated in various languages before the book itself was published. But Toscanelli knew still more than that; for two generations he had been settled in one of the most important cities of Italy that had been for a time the residence even of the Pope. Under Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447) an ambassador of the Grand Khan actually made his appearance in that city, as the foregoing letter relates. Moreover, exactly thirty years before (1444) another famous traveller, Nicolo di Conti had come to Pope Eugenius to do penance. He had stayed for twenty-five years in Syria, on the Persian Gulf, in India on both sides of the Ganges, in South China, in the Sunda Archipelago, in Ceylon, on shores of the Red Sea and in Egypt and had become a Mohammedan in order to save his life, for even with those of an alien faith the maxim holds good: "If you won't become my brother, then I'll crack your skull." At Florence Conti returned to the bosom of the Christian Church and the witty Pope, who had probably been either amused or indignant at the Münchhausen-like tales of a Mandeville, and who had very likely also read "Messer Marco Millione," imposed on him as penance the duty of writing his travel experiences "with the most rigorous truth." Conti dictated them himself to the papal secretary Poggio, but unfortunately this valuable manuscript, with the exception of a small fragment, has quite disappeared. Florence was the meeting-place for foreigners from the lands of every sovereign, explorers as well as travellers. Toscanelli was therefore at the source, and he

knew how to make use of it. It was his custom to make the acquaintance of these people and to put them through an exhaustive cross-examination. In that way he constantly rectified by fresh evidence the knowledge he already possessed of eastern lands. If Marco Polo had spun yarns about twelve thousand marble bridges in the city of Quinsay alone—Toscanelli knew that there were only ten. But he had just as little information about the other side of the world, the western, as had the ancients and his numerous learned contemporaries. He consequently fell into the same—in this case—fortunate errors as Columbus. He was grossly mistaken about the extent of the Asiatic continent towards the East, and about the “shortest” way to India. In *one* respect alone was he different from the Genoese: he was no seaman and an old man of seventy-seven. The *execution* of the plan he had devised in his study at Florence, however simple he imagined it to be, he had to leave to another. But it was the execution that was the decisive thing, when all was said and done.

There are several words, however, in the Florentine’s letter that have to be strongly underlined. Toscanelli was a tranquil scholar, who made his income as a highly respected physician. His study of natural science and cosmography was due to a sheer love of knowledge and he never took the trouble even to publish in a book the wealth of information he possessed. Perhaps he smiled quietly to himself when he listened to the more or less credible tales of braggart travellers and daring merchants; he kept his doubts carefully to himself for the story-tellers were very touchy on that score. When he heard time and again of tremendously difficult, costly and dangerous expeditions through the endless tracts of Asia, through wildernesses and across towering mountains, he would probably, as he sat at his desk, shake his head over those people who tramped blindly about the world and, accustomed mostly to journeys by land, did not see that there was a far shorter road to their goal. But he had no intention of going about hawking projects or having himself laughed at by so-called practical men, who always claimed to be better informed than anyone else. Nor was he a sailor who sought employment in the colonial service and wanted to distinguish himself by some new discovery, gaining fame and wealth and perhaps one day settling down as governor of some island lost in the ocean—an aim of life that hovered before the inward eye of many of those who thronged the Portuguese Colonial Office. He did not write to King Alfonso on his



own account in order to win him for his plan, but simply answered a *question*, and in such a case he was accustomed to give a detailed answer conscientiously and to the best of his knowledge. He had been asked for his verdict as an expert, and he gave it. His friend Martinez, the king's father-confessor, had suggested that Toscanelli should be asked for his advice. When Martinez visited him in Florence a long time before this, the famous cosmographer had attempted to show him the possibility of a western route. Martinez perhaps even now smiled rather sceptically at his proposal. Still--if anyone could give expert advice, it was his friend Paolo. For that reason the king asked him to get from Toscanelli the clearest possible description, "so that the least skilled might grasp and understand this route."

The project of a western route? It existed therefore already even in Portugal! How did it happen that the Colonial Office in Lisbon suddenly wanted to have information about an undertaking of such incalculable magnitude, when they had quite enough to do with their costly African possessions?

## CHAPTER VII

### THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENT—CHRISTOBAL COLUMBO

AFTER the death of Henry the Navigator, who in accordance with a well-planned scheme despatched ships to the coast of Africa and had organized an excellent administration for the growing colonial empire, the enterprise of the Portuguese soon came to a standstill. Every new discovery, to begin with, cost money; and Prince Henry, although he was a cautious calculator, a model administrative official, and a man of utterly unimpeachable character, was seized with the fever of discovery and piled up immense debts that had to be met. Under his nephew, King Alfonso V, the Portuguese advanced some distance beyond Gambia, the most southerly point reached up till then (13 degrees north latitude), but after that the enterprise of the state had relaxed. The trade-monopoly for the west coast of Africa, which had till then been occupied, was farmed out to a private contractor, and in 1469 the monopoly also for the still unknown Guinea coast was given for five years to Fernando Gomez, who had to bind himself to continue each year his voyages of discovery for 500 leagues. He gained immense wealth by compulsory trade in gold and slaves. For that reason the state resumed the monopoly for itself in 1475, and John, the crown-prince at that time, who appeared to have inherited some of his great-uncle Henry's restless spirit of adventure, was invested with the revenues of the colonies. As a result both of the youthful energy of the new Colonial Minister and of his hope of abundant reward, fresh life was infused into the administration of the African possession. In the bureaus plans were concerted, calculations were made, and a look-out was kept again for men who were acquainted with nautical science and who in addition were daring enough to follow the coast farther towards the South, and plant the flag of Portugal everywhere. Dare-devils of that kidney who were prepared to hazard their lives were in request, for many a ship never returned. They were wrecked on reefs that ran out far into the sea, or among the breakers that surged about some mighty pro-

montory; and any who escaped by swimming ashore were killed by the natives. On one occasion a ship came back, which had been brought home to Portugal by four brave cabin boys, the rest of the crew having fallen under the poisoned arrows of the negroes. It was usual to transport to an unknown land trodden for the first time, men who had been condemned for murder with robbery. That was the price at which they were redeemed from the gallows. A commission to a captain of those days simply to set out on the discovery of a new bit of the earth was as unlikely as an official command issued at the present day to undertake a journey to the moon. It was entirely a question of volunteers. For twelve years the Portuguese had attempted in vain to round the ill-fated Cape Bojador (26 degrees north latitude, immediately south of the Canary Islands) without knowing that as early as 1251 a Genoese had succeeded in performing this feat of navigation. The ocean current was so strong there and the sea so beset with shoals that Cape Bojador came to be regarded as the most southerly attainable point. Then a page to Henry the Navigator came forward. He had fallen into disgrace because he had engaged in a slave-raiding expedition on his own account, and in order to win his lord's favour again he offered himself for this seemingly impossible venture. As it simply meant keeping a sufficient distance from the coast to which captains and especially their crews had formerly clung so timidly, it proved to be quite without danger. The fool-hardy page Gil Eannes thus opened up the way to the prince for further explorations. Volunteers of this sort did not come forward every day, and it might be a long time before arrangements were so far advanced that they could be given a ship. Their motives were probed, they were kept hanging on and buoyed up with promises for the future, and in the end they were forgotten. Among those who presented themselves at the Portuguese Colonial Office and were always turned away, but who obstinately came back again, there must also have been the Italian Columbus.

In a letter which Columbus wrote a year before his death to King Ferdinand of Castile he reminds him that he came to Spain in his reign, after he had been unsuccessful in Portugal, because "the king of Portugal who had a better understanding of the discovery of unknown lands than any other prince, was so blinded by the Will of the Almighty that he was unable for fourteen years to understand what I said to him." Actually there were two kings, Alfonso V and his successor after 1481, John II. Or perhaps Columbus only

means the latter, because it was with him chiefly he had dealings. The youthful Prince John mastered the routine of the colonial administration at the beginning of the seventies, so that he might be able to wield a decisive influence over it from 1473 onwards.

These fourteen years that have been the subject of heated dispute among so many investigators, fit in so well with the course of events that at any rate they come nearest to the truth. Some time about 1474 Columbus goes one day to the building in Lisbon where nautical affairs are officially managed. By dint of questioning he succeeds in reaching the room with the word "Africa" written on the door, and puts his proposal before the officials, who naturally are not those of the first rank: he believes that the distant India can be reached by a shorter route than the one hitherto tried unsuccessfully. "Well, I never!" says the chancery councillor dumbfounded; "where is it then?"

"By ship across the western ocean", is the laconic and decided answer.

The official eyes the man from head to foot. He is certainly not a tramp; his clothes are decent, indeed rather neat although poorish; he has better manners than the foolhardy adventurers who call often enough at the Chancery. Perhaps he is an unpractical projector or a harmless lunatic. The chancery councillor calls a colleague from the next room and begins to make enquiries. "Your birth-place? Your age? But you look much older. Are you a bachelor? Good! Your occupation?—Seaman? Are you really a seaman? And you can draw maps? Let me see them!"

The official glances at the papers the stranger lays before him. They are not so bad, though—the man can draw. "Do you live here in Lisbon?"—He makes a note of the name and address; there may occasionally be need for a man like this; the captains are always asking for more maps than they can supply. "So you have sailed on the Mediterranean? You have been to Sicily and the north coast of Africa, and now you have reached us? And you want to cross the ocean straight away? Are you in your right senses?" The second official by this time is grinning, and the petitioner's face flushes with shame or wrath. "You are surely very touchy! Well, my good man, sleep over the affair again. There's another day tomorrow. I'm confoundedly busy today. Good-bye!"

Columbus gathers his papers together and with a curt nod

leaves the place. He can still hear the two officials burst out laughing and call after him "Pleasant journey!"

On the second occasion he is rebuffed even outside the door; he is told he had better make a written application. Columbus does so reluctantly. Like all inventors and discoverers he is distrustful. He has an idea and he would like to carry it out, but for that he needs the help of others. It is a daily occurrence to have the idea accepted and then the help refused. There are always people who are ready for anything—that is a factor that has also to be taken into account. The Colonial Office has simply to ask someone in the penitentiary: "Will you undertake such and such a voyage? If you are fortunate you will become a free and wealthy man." So there was need for caution in explaining an idea of this kind, everything should not be told at the outset. But he has to write now, and accordingly he begins to note down how the plan unfolded in his mind, how he conceives it should be carried out and with what means and so on. He goes one day with these papers to the Colonial Office and is very angry when they are taken from him and he is promised further word about them.

He is at sea for a year. Then he suddenly stands once more at the office-door, and this time he even has a pleasant reception. He comes precisely at the right time—the ministerial councillor has just been busy with his long document. "What was your name, I wonder? Columbo? Ah, quite right! Just wait a second! Here is the official deed. We do things in order here. Ah, what I wanted to say was—but you will have to wait—the adjutant of His Royal Highness Prince John is here just now. The ministerial councillor would like to see you for a little."

Columbus waits and at length he stands before this official through whose hands the negotiations are to pass, although he may scarcely have any say in the final decision. That is settled in the royal closet, and if there is any possibility at all of gaining entrance there, it will be perhaps through his influence. "So you are Columbo? Are you an Italian? Why are you so far from home? I dare say there is not much more to be done in Genoa? Ah, yes, I should think so—then you have come to a more likely quarter here."

Columbus pricks up his ears, and in his excitement his heart beats violently. "Ah, my dear sir, you have no idea how many similar projects are brought here every day. But they're all just paper, paper! There's nothing practical about them! But you are a seaman yourself! Do you imagine I could find even three

men who would be willing to make *this* voyage with you? And jailbirds would hardly be company for you, would they? But your project interests me, it really interests me. Even although it is not quite novel. But, tell me, how did you come to think about it? Take a seat, please."

Columbus begins to speak and he explains the reasons for his belief, for his firm conviction, that it is possible to reach India by sailing westwards. The ministerial councillor interrupts him rather impatiently: "Yes, yes, I have read all that, it is all in your manuscript. But—don't take it amiss of me, please—after all you are no scholar—have you not a scientist or someone like that who would support your petition?"

Columbus replies that he has not discussed his project—he emphasizes the word—with any scientist, that the plan developed from his own reflection—The ministerial councillor interrupts him again: "My dear sir, reflection is not good enough. If you will allow me to give you some good advice: Possess your soul in patience and take any chance of listening to what experts think of your foolhardy scheme—to use no stronger word. Meanwhile the affair is not by any means ripe enough yet for discussion. As you know, times are bad and His Majesty has so many other things to worry him—that it is quite useless to put any further proposals before him. But you can trust me to look after the affair—and who knows what the morrow will bring forth? You will hear from me—Good-bye!"

The ministerial councillor is favourably impressed with the visit, and he lays the official paper aside. When young Prince John comes poking about there again he will have some fun with him about this hare-brained proposal. He will laugh!

One day Prince John asks for the latest news from Africa, for he has to gather information on that subject, and he has the official document Columbo put before him as a surprise. He is delighted, and the ministerial councillor wonders whether he should petition that day for a modest increase of salary. Such a favourable opportunity is not likely to occur again for a while. But the prince is in a hurry. "That's splendid—he is over the heads of you gentlemen here—I must show this at once to my father. The fellow has pluck!" And His Royal Highness is already outside the door. The disappointed ministerial councillor casts a furtive glance at him as he leaves and is furious—at Columbus!

Kings Alfonso's son bursts in upon him: Exciting news! The

like has never happened before. He must read this fellow's petition at once! "It is screamingly funny! And he meant it all quite seriously! Besides on other points he seems quite a rational creature!"

The king reads, but he is not at all inclined to laugh. He looks at the papers thoughtfully. "What do they say over yonder?" he asks; by that he means the gentlemen in the Colonial Office. The protocol is to remain there. "What fine handwriting the man has!" The prince, too, grows thoughtful. Was his father going to take the thing seriously?

In the evening Cardinal Martinez pays his usual daily call. As he takes his departure the king slips the document into his hand: "Read that, please!" Martinez brings it back on the following day. He has read the document and is astounded, really astounded to see things like that in black and white—and by an ordinary seaman too—for his friend—His Majesty knows of the famous Toscanelli in Florence—told him something like this a few years ago—he was quite enamoured of the idea—"Quite right!—the famous Toscanelli—listen my dear cardinal, you might write to him and ask him what he thinks of this business—but cautiously, quite cautiously! Look up again what he told you before on this matter, you may get more exact details about it. Do not mention the name of the person who wrote this! We cannot find employment for all the projectors in the world and we have a sufficient number of our own people for such schemes."

Martinez writes, and Toscanelli answers on the 25th of June 1474 (Cf. p. 39 ff.) Meanwhile Prince John has become head of the naval department and the letter from Florence is not without some influence. The official deed and Columbus are to all intents and purposes forgotten. "Tell me, your Eminence," Prince John one day asks in passing, "is that troublesome old nuisance Toscanelli quite right in the head?" Martinez makes a wry face and points to the letter lying on the Conference table. "Well, the affair is beginning to take shape—according to what he writes here it looks like child's play. But where is the money to come from, even for a tentative effort? I shall take the letter and keep it among my confidential papers—we shall return to it afterwards."

Meanwhile the autumn of 1474 has drawn on. Columbus reminds the Colonial Office by letter of his petition. The ministerial councillor hands the letter on and writes on the margin: "the petitioner grows annoying—should probably be definitely refused." No answer is sent.

King Henry of Castile dies on the 11th December 1474. The whole peninsula is in turmoil. Henry's step-sister, Isabella, the wife of Ferdinand of Arragon is proclaimed queen. Alfonso of Portugal enters the lists. The daughter of Henry IV is excluded from the succession on account of her alleged illegitimate birth and she is Alfonso's niece. He takes her part and wants to become her knight-errant. He lives entirely in the frenzied atmosphere of medieval romantic knighthood which is quite out of fashion, and he is cut out for a Don Quixote. In May 1474 he invades Castile, and the war of succession begins, which lasts four-and-a-half years.

Everything that is not absolutely necessary is postponed. The king just now has other cares—even Columbus himself has to admit this. "There is nothing to be done before the end of the war, so have patience. India won't run away!"



## CHAPTER VIII

### FLIGHT FROM PORTUGAL

WHEN the war between Spain and Portugal broke out Columbus was on a voyage to Chios, and in the years that followed he led a roaming life. But at intervals he rested for weeks and months at a time in Lisbon. He often walked past the Colonial Office, where his fate was finally to be decided. It cost him an effort to mount the stairs and have himself announced to the ministerial councillor. The latter was in an ill humour and could scarcely recall the affair. "Come to me again in a year's time! Good-bye."

On the next occasion he was not admitted, in spite of repeated demands. He voyaged again on Portuguese ships and visited England and Iceland. Two years afterwards the war came to an end and Portugal had to give in. Ferdinand and Isabella sat on the throne of Castile and ruled with a firm hand. Spain seemed to waken to new life; even the refractory nobles began to attend Court again and Portugal watched the growth of its neighbour with alarm and suspicion. But so long as the Moors remained in Granada and on the south coast of the peninsula a check was put on undesirable ambition. Rumours were heard of warlike preparations and deliberations; evidently something was going to happen in that quarter before long. The Moors were tenacious; the whole of Castile might batter at Granada in vain. But Isabella had made marvellous progress—that woman was equal to two kings.

Columbus was once again in Lisbon and stood in the presence of the ministerial councillor, who this time was quite jovial and talkative. "Ah, my dear friend you have no idea of all we have to do here! These arrears! We are doing nothing else but working them off — working them off. It is your turn now without fail. Your affair looks not at all unlikely—believe me—I was always on your side! Even when you were here for the first time—but all sorts of things have happened since then. You will become a famous man yet! What do you think old Toscanelli—a tremendously learned old gentleman in Florence—says about your project? He drew a chart at once for it—quite

offhand! Everything is in apple-pie order, so to speak—so far as I am concerned you can start tomorrow!”

“Toscanelli?” Columbus burst out. “A chart? Can I see it by any chance?”

“For Heaven’s sake, no, my dear friend—perhaps I have told tales out of school—good Lord! the affair is secret! Strictly secret! I adjure you—not a word about this on your life! Otherwise we shall lose the whole game! I and you, especially you! Don’t breathe a syllable, I beseech you! One gets quite muddled with so much to do! You promise then?—not a word! Keep silent and wait—your time will come.”

As Columbus groped his way down the dark stairs he had to hold on to the banisters—he felt quite giddy. Was this the result of joy, or of fear? Toscanelli? He was in the secret then? Columbus had often heard the name. He frequently visited the house of a Florentine merchant Lorenzo Giraldi, who had a business here in Lisbon. He would ask him that very day. And a map?—Could anyone draw a map of countries and seas that no one had ever seen? Where did this Toscanelli get his information? Had he been made acquainted with his manuscript? Columbus had the feeling that someone was stealthily rifling his pockets. A map apparently drawn according to his own specifications! Or did this Toscanelli know more than he, far more? Was another man thrusting himself in front of him? Was there a sinister game being played behind his back? After all it was *his* project, and if Toscanelli drew a map for it, why was he not shown it? What did the word “secret” mean, when *his* secret had been handed over to an utter stranger? But Toscanelli had evidently praised his plan. Why was that, too, kept secret from him?

These questions buzzed incessantly in his brain, and he was quite stupefied when he arrived at his house. That evening he went to Giraldi’s house and asked him about Toscanelli. Oh, yes, he was a highly respected man, a capital fellow, fabulously learned and a physician in great request, yet with all that as modest and unassuming as the poorest of his patients. Why did he ask?—Columbus replied with the counter-question: would Giraldi be willing to have a letter sent to Florence for this Toscanelli with his next post? Oh surely—the post went in four days; and Giraldi wished to add his respectful greetings.

Columbus felt somewhat reassured When Giraldi spoke

like that there was no fear of any trap. Toscanelli would tell him frankly what had happened—and surely he, Columbus, if anyone else in the world had to know what had been going on. This business of secrecy in the Colonial Office, or even higher up, did not concern him. If the ministerial councillor had let the cat out of the bag, that was his affair. Or would it be risky to ask Toscanelli? Caution was certainly advisable. Were they setting a snare for him? If he caused the ministerial councillor any embarrassment in his official position, he would have an embittered enemy in quarters where he needed a supporter.

So he wrote to Toscanelli, putting his plan before him and asking him for his opinion. If the savant was really the kind of man Giraldi said he was, then he would surely give the same answer to the same question. He did not say a word about the chart, and he wrote in Portuguese, in which language he felt more at home than in his native tongue. Moreover he had noticed that many persons will always do a favour to a foreigner rather than to one of their own fellow-countrymen.

He was quite right in his calculation! Only a few weeks had passed when a clerk from Giraldi's office brought him a letter that had come with the Florentine post. Columbus opened it with trembling hands. Toscanelli's answer was only a short one, but the other contents of the envelope drew from Columbus a cry of joy. Toscanelli wrote:

"I see your noble and great desire to sail to the lands where the spices grow. I therefore send you in answer to your letter the copy of another letter which I sent a considerable time ago, before the embroilments of the war with Castile, to a friend of mine in the service of His Majesty the King of Portugal. I had to answer a question which he addressed to me by order of the king about this same matter. I send you also a chart which agrees exactly with the one I sent to him."

A copy of the letter to Cardinal Martinez, dated 25th June 1474, and the chart were enclosed! Thus Toscanelli had nevertheless considered it advisable to retain a copy of both.

So he held the "secret" document in his hands! The picture of that side of the globe that up till then no mortal had seen lay before him as clear and well drawn as if the Holy Ghost had guided the scholar's pen! There was even an indication of the route which led most speedily to the islands of the West, and from there to the Asiatic continent that lay beyond them! And

the names of the cities of which Marco Polo had given a description were recorded! And everything was as obvious as if it were a question of the simplest and most matter-of-course affair! It was like an hallucination: the work, the deed, on which he had brooded for so many years, lay as it were completed before him—there was nothing more for him to do than to follow the pathfinder! If only he had a ship—a single ship!

But would Portugal ever give him that? The king had ordered that Toscanelli should be asked to give him a description so clear that “even the least skilled might be able to grasp and understand this route.” Toscanelli’s answer expressly repeated the reference to the use that was to be made of his information! He, Columbus, could in no case be the “least skilled,” since he had conceived this idea of a world-voyage independently and had foreseen everything in his mind’s eye, although he was not so rash and daring as this scholar, who, coming to a hasty decision, had sketched the picture of the unknown world! Toscanelli’s letter to Martinez contained nothing more than Columbus himself had outlined. But the chart had now described everything so lucidly that all difficulties seemed to be removed, and the king, Prince John and his co-workers had this chart in their possession. They would easily find someone, although one of the “least skilled” would make the attempt on the strength of that. And even if he did not succeed, any misfortune would necessarily postpone a new attempt for an indefinite time!

Toscanelli’s letter was a victory for Columbus, but at the same time it was a defeat for him! There was no more hope for him, at least in Portugal. What had he to expect from a government that took his idea as its lawful prize and as early as 1474 had had the intention of realizing it without consulting him? It was a fortunate chance for him that the war came, otherwise a Portuguese flotilla would long ago have been on the way.

But in the first place Columbus had to thank the obliging scholar in Florence, and once more he received an answer. This time Toscanelli wrote in greater detail.

“I have received your letter with your enclosures, and I consider myself well recompensed by them. I commend your desire to make a voyage to eastern lands by the route described on my chart. Everything would be more clearly seen on a globe. I am rejoiced that you understood it so well. The route is not only possible, it is also the right one and it is safe; it offers a

priceless reward of honour and wealth and the greatest fame throughout Christendom. That would have been just as obvious to you, if you had had the same opportunities as I have had of conversing with so many distinguished and learned men who came from those countries, as well as with highly esteemed merchants who have long traded there. The route leads, of this be assured, to mighty kingdoms, large, densely populated cities and very rich provinces, where everything of which we have pressing need is in profuse abundance—a wealth of varied spices and of precious stones. The princes and kings whom you will meet will be more rejoiced than you, since they will at last come into contact with Christians of our lands and be able to converse with learned men about religion and all the branches of science, for many of them are Christians already. For this and for other reasons I do not wonder that you have the courage to undertake this voyage; but there have always been men among the Portuguese who have been distinguished by the spirit of enterprise.”

Columbus had certainly mentioned the religious object of the voyage in his letter of thanks. This motive was not so strongly emphasized by Toscanelli even to Cardinal Martinez.

It is a great pity that Columbus' own letters to Toscanelli are no longer extant and that only copies of the answers to them exist, for one essential thing is lacking—the date. Certainly this does not affect in any material way the succession of events. Toscanelli's first letter to Columbus contains a time-reference which is unfortunately vague: “before the embroilments (in Portugal) of the war with Castile.” It cannot, therefore, have been written *before* May 1475; but it may just as well have been written *during* the Portuguese-Castilian war of succession as after its close. It cannot, however, be much later, for Toscanelli died on 15th May 1482. Further we can only conjecture when and how Columbus first got to know of Toscanelli's letter to Cardinal Martinez, which gave rise to his well-founded suspicion that the Portuguese colonial administration was about to attempt to carry out his plan behind his back, for the words in Toscanelli's letter to Martinez about the “least skilled” betray this intention only too plainly. The war prevented this, but forbearance is not acquittance. Columbus had therefore every reason to press for a decision in order to form other plans in the event of his proposals being finally rejected.

He succeeded at length, by his persistence, in forcing his way to the king, though hardly to Alfonso V, who died mentally deranged on the 28th of August 1481, but certainly to his son and successor John II, who now went on vigorously with the voyages of discovery on the African coast, after a papal bull (dated 21st of July 1481) had confirmed Portugal in the possession of all its settlements in that region. He ordered the fort St. Jorge to be built at once, and assumed the title of "Lord of Guinea," a sign that this portion of his colonial empire lay nearest his heart. What was his attitude to the plan, still always hanging in mid air, of a voyage round the world, which Columbus evidently kept dinning into his ears?

Events behind the scenes in the government and at the Court are veiled in obscurity, but some indication of what was going on is given by a development which Columbus with his sharp-sighted suspicion, was afraid might take place. In the first place John appointed a Commission to consider the plan. It consisted of his father-confessor, the scholarly Bishop of Ceuta and his physicians-in-ordinary Rodrigo and Joseph, who ranked as capable cosmographers. Their verdict ran: Columbus is an idle, fantastic babbler, and his plans are the chimeras which have been engendered by the tales and inventions of Marco Polo, a visionary of the same kidney! This is the only occasion on which Columbus and his plans are associated directly with Marco Polo, and apparently with justice, for to whom could Columbus appeal other than to this sole eyewitness who had for many years visited the lands of the Orient? Toscanelli's statements, too, were only at second hand and had as their original source this *Messer Marco Millione*. But unfortunately Marco Polo was in bad repute with the Lisbon Commission. Besides Columbus would certainly be careful not to betray to them his relations with Toscanelli. King John, it is said, did not acquiesce in the verdict, but summoned a junto composed of a large number of the scholars in his kingdom. The Bishop of Ceuta was also a member of this junto, and his emphatic warning against wild schemes, for which Portugal's greatly exhausted resources were insufficient, carried the day.

The king seems to have been still dissatisfied with this, and he dealt with Columbus directly. But when finally the question was discussed as to what indemnity the latter expected in the event of success, he grew so angry at the extent of his demands

that he broke off the audience abruptly. What was the good of Portugal's having a Colonial Office? And now the event that Columbus had foreseen was to take place: King John dropped him, but not his scheme! A caravel set out for Cape Verde, ostensibly to carry provisions there, but with secret orders to steer west as far as possible from that point. From Cape Verde onwards—that was, at any rate, the route that Toscanelli had laid down on his chart. But after some days the crew lost heart at the sight of the boundless waste of waters and returned to Lisbon.

This failure was certainly talked about in all quarters and Columbus must have learned of it, even if it was only a false rumour. His plan was no longer a secret, and the possibility of someone else's carrying it out put him into a torment of anxiety. Even in the summer of 1484, as Columbus relates in his diary on the 9th of August 1492, a man came from Madeira to King John and requested a vessel in order to search for land which he said he had descried from that island.

Meanwhile either Columbus' wife had died or the marriage had been dissolved. Nothing more bound him to Portugal, that land of disillusion, than perhaps—poverty. Or had he to fear that he would be kept there by force? He had gained the most intimate knowledge of the schemes of colonization which had occupied the attention of the king and his advisers; he was in possession of records and maps connected with these schemes, which he naturally wanted to take away with him. These maps showed the route to India, the attainment of which was Portugal's supreme ambition. The exportation of maps of the territory which Portugal either held or intended to hold, was subject to heavy penalties, even to the death sentence. Was this the reason that made it impossible for him simply to take service again on some ship? By his marriage he had become a Portuguese. If it were discovered that he meant to flee the country in order to offer his plans to another state which Portugal feared as its rival, his papers would at least have been taken from him. Presumably he was encumbered with debts which he was unable to meet, and the bailiff was not unknown to him. He himself has never told why and how he left Portugal so suddenly in the autumn of 1484. We only know that he fled secretly across the frontier with the slim bundle of a travelling journeyman, accompanied by his son Diego, and that he did not feel safe until he was on Spanish soil.

That he was afraid of police prosecution clearly follows from a letter of the king from whose sovereignty he absconded. Four years later John II attempted to attract the runaway back again to himself. Apparently he had learned that Columbus was pursuing his plans in Castile and that the prospects were favourable. In that case it would be advantageous to secure this man, who was a subject of his, by dealing with him in a friendly manner. If there was anything substantial in his idea, and if Castile under the energetic rule of Ferdinand and Isabella took it up, then possibly a new colonial power might spring up, which would put Portugal in the shade or even overwhelm it. Accordingly he invited Columbus to return to Lisbon; and, as he had learned that he was involved in legal proceedings, if his invitation was to have any success at all, he had above all to reassure him that in this connection there would be no unpleasant consequences. He therefore wrote on the 20th of March 1488 "to our personal friend in Seville" in the following words: "And because you have chanced to be threatened by our authorities on account of certain affairs in which you have chanced to be implicated, we give you by this our letter assurance for your coming and going and sojourning, so that you are neither to be arrested, seized, arraigned, cited nor questioned on account of any cause whatsoever, whether it be a civil or criminal suit or any other." The repetition of the word "chanced" suggests that Columbus was not prosecuted for an offence committed by himself but was involved with some other persons in a civil or criminal lawsuit.

Columbus as a matter of fact made use of this letter of safe-conduct, perhaps he may have asked for it. For in December 1487 Bartolomeo Diaz had returned from a voyage of discovery that meant a great victory for Portugal: he had reached the south point of Africa and doubled the Cape of Good Hope! Columbus wished not only to hear more details about this achievement, but also above all to greet his brother Bartolomeo, who had taken part in this successful voyage as cartographer.



## CHAPTER IX

### OUTSIDE MANY DOORS

COLUMBUS reappears again not far from the frontier of Portugal. He travels on foot from Huelva to the small town of Palos at the mouth of the Rio Tinto in the Gulf of Cadiz, hoping to have an opportunity of finding a ship for France in that seaport. A Franciscan cloister lies an hour's journey from Palos on a barren hill facing the sea. Its brightly-painted walls form a landmark for seamen. It was a fortress when the Arabs were still in possession of this portion of the Spanish coast; hence its name La Rábida from the Arabic word *rabita*. For more than a century it has been a place of pilgrimage, for its church contains a miraculous image of the Virgin. Even in the time of the Romans the locality was consecrated by a temple to Proserpine.

The day is hot, the travellers are tired and in need of refreshment. The rather unenticing inns at the harbour of Palos are reached still quite early in the day and a place of pilgrimage ought not to be passed by without offering up a prayer there. Besides, little Diego longs for the cool shade of a cloister, and willingly follows his father who turns off from the road to climb the hill.

The porter stands outside the gate and watches them both arriving. He does not expect any more guests today and these two do not look like beggars. He returns their greeting and asks what they are wanting. "You will perhaps be able to spare a glass of milk and a loaf for the boy," says the stranger rather dejectedly as he sits down heavily on a bench at the wall, from which he has a wide prospect over the blue sea. The porter is a little surprised, but he nods good-humouredly, and soon the youngster is busy with his meal. The fare the porter brings is sufficient for the father as well, but he only eats a bit of bread and sits absorbed in his thoughts, staring at the sea and, evidently not wishing to be disturbed, gives very laconic answers to the lay-brother's questions. A strange sort of devotee this! And

here in the lonely cloister one would be very glad to hear some news, for there is war in the land. Ferdinand and Isabella are determined to put an end to the dominion of the Moors on the south coast. The campaign is in its third year, but the foe keeps a firm grip; his bravery is famed of old, and the smallest foothold gained by the troops of Castile and Arragon costs rivers of blood.

Just as Columbus is making enquiries about the image of the Virgin and is about to follow the porter towards it, a second brother passes. The boy kisses his hand reverently and the father rises in silent greeting. The lay-brother makes a gesture of interrogation in order to draw the other's attention to the visitors. The Father draws nearer and detains the stranger by asking him a few questions: Whence has he come? Whither is he going? What is his occupation? And as his glance happens to fall on the remainder of the meal, the man whom he is questioning and who has seen the glance, answers him in a voice trembling with anger: "I am a seaman from Genoa, and because no one will accept the kingdoms I offer, I have to go begging."

This answer, given in a strange dialect, cannot but surprise the Father. He lays his hand reassuringly on the shoulder of this extraordinary man, pushes him down on the bench again and sits down beside him. He has such a friendly and impressive way of putting his questions that the other's bitterness and reticence vanish and he indicates in a few words what has befallen him until now. This rouses the Father to lively astonishment, and Columbus sees from his questions that he has to do with a man who is well informed on these subjects, that he is a scholar who has employed the quiet leisure of the cloister in the study of geographical problems and that he knows the ins and outs of all questions of cosmography better than Columbus himself. From him Columbus hears for the first time of the voyage of Pedro Velasco, who belonged to the neighbouring seaport of Palos, and who, setting out from Fayal in 1452 had discovered the island of Flores, the extreme western outpost of the Azores; he alleged that he had sailed 150 leagues farther west and he must have reached the so-called Sargasso Sea, which caused Columbus so much trouble and fear on the first of his later voyages. Antonio de Marchena—that was the name of the learned monk of La Rábida—is probably the first person whose face does not betray incredulity or irony as Columbus unfolds his plan to him. He merely gives him a long, earnest

and searching look, and when Columbus returns that look without embarrassment, he takes him upstairs to the library of the cloister; the boy can remain meanwhile in the garden and pilfer the berries. In this comfortable room Marchena brings him some books and a collection of maps of the world in which he is keenly interested. He asks endless questions, and when Columbus becomes rather restless, as dusk is already beginning to fall, the Father will not hear of his going farther: he must certainly stay over-night; this surprising meeting, which is perhaps even a fortunate dispensation, will appeal no less to the Prior Juan Perez. The prior, he tells Columbus, is considered a man of no ordinary understanding and he has very high connections; he was once Treasurer to Ferdinand and Isabella, then he took orders and the queen made him her father-confessor and afterwards appointed him Prior of La Rábida.

Until then it had scarcely entered Columbus' thoughts to address himself to the government of Castile with his project. The war with the Moors would presumably still go on for a considerable time, and it was by no means certain that it would end victoriously. Castile possessed the Canary Islands, but up till then it had made no attempt to thwart the Portuguese in their discoveries. Now for the first time, in his conversation with Father Alonzo, who had a very intimate knowledge of Queen Isabella from his prior's stories, praising her especially for her profound piety, and who spoke with enthusiasm of the war against the Moors as a new crusade against the infidels, it was brought home to him that perhaps he might hope for help to be given him here for quite other motives than greed and lust for conquest. And then during the evening hints regarding certain possibilities were thrown out by the Prior Juan Perez, who had received the stranger with marked respect after a short explanation on the part of Alonzo, and had invited him with charming hospitality to stay in the cloister as long as he pleased. These hints induced him to accept the invitation and remain for the time being at La Rábida.

About a week later, having been provided with money by Perez, he continued his journey, this time alone. He felt he could leave his son in the care of the monks, and instead of seeking a ship at Palos, he set out on a small ass that had also been given him, northwards towards Seville and from there to Cordova. Prior Juan Perez had given him letters strongly recommending

him to influential persons at the royal Court, to the then Treasurer Luiz de Santangel, to the archbishop Hernando de Talavera, the queen's father-confessor, to the Duke of Medina-Celi and others. As a result of these recommendations the name of Columbus and his plan for a world-voyage soon reached the ears of the queen. The proposal at first merely aroused doubt and astonishment and smiling scepticism and, amongst some of the royal councillors, laughter and scorn, and the great expectations that had accompanied Columbus on his journey sank down again like the flames of a straw fire. He certainly received in that same year, 1484, some small pecuniary aid from the royal privy purse, but the matter seemed to end with that. All energies were engrossed by the war and Columbus heard on every side that in the meantime there could be no thought of fantastic undertakings on sea.

He found, however, in the Duke of Medina-Celi a patron who took an interest in him. The duke evidently had the spirit of the gambler and was an enterprising man who added to his wealth by engaging in commercial transactions. He scented the possibility of untold gain in the project and kept the foreigner for a while at his house in Puerto de Santa Maria. This is proved from a letter which the duke sent to Cardinal de Mendoza on the 19th of March 1495. He had just received tidings at his castle Cogolludo, he wrote, that Columbus had arrived at Lisbon from his first voyage to the West and had found everything he had sought for, and since enormous new commercial enterprises would now have to be undertaken he wanted to have a share in them. He therefore requested the cardinal to obtain permission for him at once from the queen to send some caravels at his own expense and for his own profit to the newly discovered lands, for he had materially assisted in the discovery of this "big thing": when this "Christobal Colombo came from Portugal he meant to betake himself to France to seek assistance there," and when the Duke of Medina-Sidonia had declined his proposals he had taken the foreigner into his house and maintained him for two years, thereby preventing him from offering to France his great discovery. The duke accordingly wished to be indemnified for the sacrifices he had then made in the maintenance of the discoverer. These sacrifices could not have been so very great, but they apparently made it possible for Columbus to stay in Spain without having to live entirely at the expense of his hosts.

In any case there was very little to be made of preparing charts in a country which confined itself within such narrow limits so far as the merchant-service was concerned, and was moreover engaged in a ruinous war. Columbus found a kind of substitute for this in book-selling, a new trade which at that time began to be very promising. He certainly went about selling illustrated books and broadsheets with news of the war and of world-events and in this way kept his head above water. He combined with his journeys the unremitting pursuit of his aim, calling upon influential people to whom the recommendation of the Prior Juan Perez gave him access, in order to win them over for his project. He seems, however, also to have looked to other countries for help in the event of Castile failing him. He is said to have been in Genoa in 1485 and to have submitted his proposals there, only to meet with a mortifying refusal. Even in Venice there existed for a long time a tradition that he had also made offers in writing to that state; but up till the present no documentary proofs of this have been found.

His endurance and his indefatigable persistence in knocking at every door behind which there was the slightest chance of his finding some support for his project, were put to severe tests. but they were not without some result. Alonzo de Quintanilla, the Controller of Finance in Castile, worried about the continual ebb in the state's exchequer resulting from the war and from the extravagance of the Court, grasped at any idea that might lead to the opening up of new sources of revenue, and listened very readily to the stories Columbus told him about the wealth of gold in the world and especially about those countries and cities in the East with roofs of gold that gleamed in the sunlight. He is said to have given him shelter for some time in his house. The papal nuncio also, Antonio Giraldini, and his brother Alexander, the tutor of the children of Ferdinand and Isabella, were favourably disposed towards him and the most powerful man at Court, whom people jocularly called "the third king of Spain," Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, the archbishop of Toledo and the chief cardinal of Spain, grasped the magnitude of his plan and its vast significance for Church and fatherland. Through their advocacy Columbus succeeded at the end of 1485 in bringing his petition at last to the quarter where its fate would finally be decided. He stood for the first time in the presence of the woman whose name will remain linked with that of the discoverer, Queen

Isabella, the greatest royal figure of that age. And if ever he showed himself a master of eloquence it was at this first audience. But he did not speak to her as he had done to the Portuguese of the immense commercial and political opportunities in a direct communication with the Far East. Face to face with the woman who was the prime mover in the crusade against the Moors and had taken part in it personally, going on campaign with the army and even wearing the soldier's coat-of-mail, he spoke of the high mission of carrying Christianity into those lands of the heathen, who according to Toscanelli longed for its light, and of uniting the ends of the earth beneath the sign of the Cross. These ends of the earth were for Columbus the two shores which stood opposite to one another on Toscanelli's map and which had been rent asunder for immemorial ages: the west coast of Spain and the east coast of Africa—and the interpretation that the orator gave of similar dark passages of the Bible made a deep impression on Isabella's imagination. The man himself had something of the Old Testament prophets in the ecstatic look of his earnest face and in his fervent and impressive words. Behind him there seemed to stand the shadow of a Higher Person, whose will alone he fulfilled and whose chosen instrument he was. Thus Isabella began to cherish the feeling that this man had a supernatural mission—a feeling that became a firm conviction and led her to give complete assent to the words that Columbus used on a later occasion, when the reminder was needed: "I came as the ambassador of the Holy Trinity to Your Majesty, the mightiest Prince in Christendom, that I might help in propagating the holy faith of Christendom; for, in very deed, God plainly speaks of these regions by the mouth of His prophet Isaiah in several passages of Holy Writ, when He declares that His Holy Name shall be proclaimed from Spain (the one end of the earth) onwards."

This audience must have taken place either in Alcalá de Henares, north-east of Madrid, where the royal Court was at that time—Isabella had given birth there to her daughter Catherine some weeks before—or in Cordova. Its first result was that Columbus could regard himself as being in the permanent service of the queen from the 20th January 1486. In his diary, which was mainly intended for her he reminds her on the 14th January 1493: "On the 20th it will be seven years since I entered into your service," and in the account of his third voyage, which he

sends from Haiti in October 1498, he begins with recalling those seven years he had spent in connection with the royal Court. He also refers to them in the account he gives of his fourth voyage, so that these dates may be accepted as fixed.

What was gained by this association with the royal household? Not much to begin with; in any case nothing like a salary that would put him in the position of no longer worrying about his livelihood. It can be proved that he again received even in 1486 a very small subsidy; but it was at least no longer an alms that one might give to a beggar in order to get rid of him, as it still had been two years before; it meant that although for the present his services could not be employed, since the war began again in Spring, still he could count on being called upon some day and that, in the event of his being in pressing need, he was assured of a place where his coming and going was not a matter of indifference. He had, to a certain extent, an official existence, and although Isabella was not in the remotest degree in a position to give him definite assurances she nevertheless promised him positively that she would reconsider his proposals as soon as the summer campaign was over. And in that matter she kept her word faithfully.

## CHAPTER X

### THE WISE MEN OF SALAMANCA

IN the evening twilight of a November day in 1486 a lonely traveller climbed with resolute step the stony path to the fortress of Salamanca, whose lofty walls, battlements and pinnacles were already dissolving into a black, crenellated silhouette against a sky silvered with mist. The guard at the gate let him enter without challenge, although the sentries were doubled, for the royal Court had taken up its winter residence in the fortified and world-renowned university city of Salamanca, in order to recuperate from the fatigue of the summer campaign against the Moors and to make extensive preparations for a decisive advance right across the enemy's territory on to the coast of the Mediterranean in the following Spring. But this wayfarer who came there from the riverside was well known to the king's soldiers and to the officers of the holy hermanadad. He was accustomed almost every afternoon, when the traffic of the city had slowed down, to range the countryside always with a hurried pace as though he had some definite goal in view. At the end of his walk he regularly came to a stand on the massive old Roman bridge below, through whose arches the still scanty water of the Torme shot as swift as an arrow towards the Douro, and he would gaze in a brown study westwards until the last golden streak of the winter sun died away. The people called him the "seafarer" with a half-derisive, half-pitying shrug of the shoulders, and his plain, even poorish garments, his coarse cloak and his heavy, buttoned-up boots quite often led insolent serving-men to jostle him. Even his tall figure, his dignified, almost haughty bearing, and his keen glance would scarcely have protected him against the unconcealed derision of the students, the rabble and the soldiery, had there not been something enigmatic about this simple man who looked almost like a beggar. Cavaliers from the Court knew him and as they rode past they would occasionally address him in words that were rather condescending and, truth to say, sounded like banter. This had led to his being nicknamed



the "seafarer" by the crowd. He was often seen at the gateway of a church in long, eager conversation with one or other of the best-known university professors, who evidently jealously guarded their clerical or scientific dignity, when they openly allowed themselves to be seen in his company. Moreover, it was rumoured abroad that several of the most powerful favourites of the royal pair had taken this foreigner under their special protection; and finally he lived as guest—a fact that everyone in the little city and above all the police knew—in the Dominican cloister of Saint Stephen, where, during those weeks, the most famous scholars of the Spanish kingdom were gathered in secret conclave.

To this cloister the returning wayfarer was even now bending his steps. He chose the loneliest streets and avoided the neighbourhood of the Palace de las Conchas at which the Court resided, in order not to meet any of those hateful courtiers who treated him either as a harmless visionary, a dangerous fool or a traitor in disguise. The least word of mockery would have roused him today to a passionate outburst, and he durst not lose the peace he had gained by the utmost exertion of his will-power on his long walk. The next hour might bring a decision the importance of which he alone was able to grasp. The royal consorts had kept their promise and had invited to their winter residence the leading men of Spanish science, mathematicians, geographers, philosophers and theologians, in order that combined with the most acute thinkers of the university of Salamanca they might discuss the question: is it at all conceivable and does it seem possible in any way to reach the distant lands in the East, above all the fabulous gold lands of Cathay and Cipango, of which the famous Marco Polo had told so many wonderful tales, by sailing across the limitless ocean which had hitherto been considered the boundary of the western world? Or rather—is it criminal presumption to wish to pass the boundaries which Divine Providence has set to the limited powers of humanity? The first question seemed to be purely a scientific one; it was a matter within the competence of geographers and astronomers, "cosmographers" as those who described the world and the universe called themselves then. But the scientists of those days, the teachers of youth at the universities, apart from isolated exceptions, were all theologians; for, though state appointments were also open to the nobles, they preferred war and politics to science, and these offices were entrusted to representatives of the clergy.

Consequently no science was ever anything but a branch of theology, which enclosed all sciences as the shell of a nut its kernel. The shell no doubt grows with the kernel, but it was blasphemy even to imagine that the kernel should ever burst the shell. Whatever could not be reconciled to the recognized fundamentals of theology was heresy, and a clerical court, the Inquisition, had existed for two hundred years with the object of suppressing this throughout the whole world. Ferdinand had introduced the Inquisition into his state in 1480, as he saw in it an effective instrument with which to break the stubbornness both of the feudal nobility and of the Spanish clerics. The number of victims burned at the stake was already well into thousands, and since one of the most unrelenting inquisitors, Peter Arbues, had been murdered by conspirators two years before in his church at Saragossa, although he usually wore a mail-shirt and helmet beneath his monkish garb, the *auto-da-fés* and the burning of heretics in the kingdom of Ferdinand and Isabella had gone on increasing. The control of the Inquisition, however, was in the hands of an order which included among its members the greatest scholars of the Middle Ages, such as Thomas Aquinas and his teacher Albertus Magnus, who was himself suspected of witchcraft. It was this order, the Dominicans, that showed the fullest understanding of the views and plans of Columbus, as was evident at the preliminary conferences held at Cordova during the summer. *Domini canes*, dogs of the Lord, they had called themselves, and their sagacity was noted. But so also were their keen scent and the width of their field of vision. Columbus had more to fear from the representatives of other orders who masked their lack of knowledge and their naïve ignorance of the world beneath a fanatical zeal and who might easily give a dangerous turn to the forthcoming pronouncement. They were all now awaiting the "sea-farer," armed with the assurance that makes literalists such as they were valiant and pugnacious, especially when confronted with an expert in their own profession; their verdict had been immovably settled beforehand in a way natural to those for whom no problems existed any longer in the cosmic system. Was it to be a discussion? Or a conference? Perhaps it would be more than that—a tribunal! But he had to stand firm, it would not do to lose his nerve now, and punctually at the appointed fifth hour Columbus slammed the knocker so violently against the iron-studded gate that the blow re-echoed from within

the house, and the lay-brother, the porter, hurried to open the gate as fast as his portly figure would allow him.

"Here you are at last! I have just been up to your cell," he shouted to Columbus as he entered. "They are expecting you."

"I know. Show me up!"

The porter, who enjoyed a chat with this modest guest of the cloister, as he came himself from a fisher-village on the Mediterranean and had as a young lad voyaged as far as the Canary Islands, went up before him; the other followed him up the well-worn stone stairs to a room on the ground floor. Outside the door of the *De Profundis* hall in which the assembly took place they both stood for a moment listening. They could hear constant tittering and laughing, which, however, was drowned by the piercingly shrill voice of a speaker. The gate-keeper opened the door quietly and thrust his friend inside. With a comprehensive glance Columbus scanned the table, which was shaped in horse-shoe fashion. In the twilight that gathered to a dense darkness beneath the vaults of the chamber, he was able to distinguish by the light of the candles only a few of the faces and the outlines of the monks' hoods. The other figures sat in arm-chairs, leaning back with bent head. Someone beckoned him to the nearest end of the table, seized his hand and drew him down on to an unoccupied seat. "Quiet!" a voice whispered to him. Only a few had noticed the entrance of the stranger and had turned their heads in his direction. The others appeared to be listening attentively to the speaker who, standing at the upper end of the table with closed eyes, waited until the laughter of his hearers ceased and then went on with his speech in a subdued tone:

"And finally—who is this man? He is no son of our land, no subject of our august majesties! He is a foreigner from Genoa, of dubious origin, from the scum of the populace, out of which from time immemorial there have risen the poisonous vapours of infidelity and heresy. No doubt our Saviour came from a hovel and brought light to the world. But our holy Church has every reason to mistrust this new Messiah who means to make a breach in the walls of the universe, walls which our Evangelists, the interpreters of the Lord, the Church Fathers and the scribes have built up during a millennium and a half! May the hand wither that dares to strike the first blow with the axe! Get thee behind me, Satan!"

The lean figure of the Franciscan sank back into the darkness. A movement of assent passed over the assembly; the sudden silence startled those who had taken advantage of the monk's long oration to snatch a belated afternoon nap. Columbus had involuntarily clenched his fist at the last words of the speaker, but his neighbour laid his hand heavily on his arm and whispered to him: "Don't let that worry you! He always preaches as though he were among downright heathen! The worst is over." And already the president, the prior of the cloister, Diego de Deza, a man of gigantic build, with a flowing white beard, had risen and was saying slowly, but in a loud, warning, threatening tone: "Sennor Colon is present. He is ready to answer any question. Let questions now be put!"

A few places removed from Columbus there rang out the nasal, drawing voice of an old man, whose biretta and gleaming chain of office marked him out as the rector of a university. "This reverend assembly will pardon me if by reason of my years I do not rise from my seat. We have carefully examined the maps and calculations of Sennor Colon that have been laid before us. Indubitably the skill in drawing shown by their author deserves every acknowledgment. That is his occupation, so far as our information goes, and his papers should prove of excellent service to our coastal mariners. Why did he not keep to this fine and clean handicraft! Let us leave aside the question of how far it may be seemly for a man of science who can take credit for some esteem in the world, to enter into serious discussion with a dilettante. The royal summons came to us, and with accustomed loyalty we gave it obedience. The questions with which we certainly have to sound this new Messiah of geography, are too numerous and too difficult to deal with here in the short time at our disposal. Sennor Colon can prepare himself for these during the weeks that follow. But nevertheless let us indicate the fundamental problem. I may assume that it is known to you all that I have devoted my life to the completion, the deepening and the dissemination of the cosmic system of Ptolemy, which despite its age of more than a thousand years is still held in regard—but I have also sought, and this above all, to give it corrections that were fundamental and imperatively necessary. Since according to the pronouncement of philosophy two truths can never contradict one another, then it must follow that astronomical truths must always be in accord with theology. Has Sennor

Colon considered that? He is a free-thinker, of whom there have been many in all ages, in all the sciences, and even in our holy religion. An inconsiderate fancy, an ingenious *apercu*, as men of letters call it—not to describe it as a disordered dream—has grown into a fixed idea with them which makes them look down with contempt on the fruits of other men's unselfish industry; and, adventurous spirits as they mostly all are, they would rather sacrifice their own life and the lives of others than confess their error betimes. Sennor Colon has apparently bestowed a glance, an all too superficial glance, on the system of Ptolemy, and it has produced a dangerous confusion in his brain as it has done in the case of so many others. For what is the presupposition of his ingenious plan? I almost hesitate to describe it to this illustrious assembly in plain words: it is the doctrine of the spherical shape of the earth, an erroneous belief into which Ptolemy also has lapsed. I see a smile on your lips—it spares me the necessity of giving my own opinion. Allow me instead to quote that of a greater man! No less a person than the immortal Church Father Lactantius more than a thousand years ago duly disposed of this fairy-tale of a sphere that was, of course, everywhere inhabitable and inhabited. 'Is anyone so demented,' he asks, with that blunt frankness so characteristic of him, 'as to believe that there are antipodes who stand with their feet against ours, human beings who go about with their feet turned upwards and their heads hanging down, that a region of the earth exists where everything is topsy-turvy, where trees grow with their branches downwards and where it rains and hails and snows upwards? The idea that the earth is round,' he adds further, and according to my humble opinion he hits the nail on the head, 'was the reason for the invention of this fable about the antipodes with their feet in the air.' That then is the judgment of Lactantius, who has been justly called the Cicero of Christianity. We too hope with him still to stand with firm foot on this old earth."

All round the board the members were shaking their heads, murmuring and laughing; someone gave the table a resounding slap with his hand. There was a smile even in the eyes of the prior. He gave a knowing wink to a young Dominican who seemed to have been waiting for the sign. He was the librarian of the cloister, and though still a young man was already famous as an all-round scholar who was acquainted with several languages and who on account of his classical Latinity had been made only

shortly before professor of Eloquence at the university of Salamanca. He had moreover a striking appearance, which the becoming white monkish garb set off admirably—a fresh, round, clean-shaven face with large, rather protruding eyes, and a wealth of dark locks round his narrow tonsure. Many of those present now leaned forward eagerly, for everyone knew from experience in other assemblies that he liked to give a new, surprising and often serious turn to the debate, and with the aid of the wide reading he always had at his command and his astonishing memory, he delighted to deal out pricks and blows that made him many a bitter foe and had already on one occasion brought him under the notice of the Inquisition. Some of the dignified prelates leaned expectantly on the table with a mingled expression of anger and malicious joy on their faces, when with a nod, which was not quite a bow, in the direction of the last speaker, he began to speak in a resonant voice, accompanying his words with easy and apparently involuntary movements of his arms and his slender hands:

“The services which the gentleman who spoke last has rendered to Ptolemy and his cosmic system render every word of recognition, nay of admiration, superfluous. His Magnificence will allow me, however”—the speaker whom he addressed, evidently already ill-at-ease, made an ironical gesture of invitation with his hand—“to prevent a misunderstanding which may easily add to the difficulty of our task and give many of our discussions an unfriendly turn that would be doing an ill service to any truth whatsoever. The doctrine of the spherical shape of the earth is still regarded by the science of today as a fairy-tale—perhaps tomorrow it will be a truth, and if our Church Father Lactantius lived at the present day his verdict would certainly be milder, for the mental development of a thousand years would be unlikely to pass him by without leaving some trace on an intellect so acute as his.” The orator seemed to take the restlessness on all sides, shown by the clearing of throats and the shoving back of chairs, as a sign of agreement. “You will all admit that that fairy-tale has an astounding vitality. The belief was so well established in antiquity that the renowned investigator of nature, Pliny, held with no less firm assurance than Lactantius that in the dispute about it there could be only two parties—scholars and blockheads. Great philosophers of antiquity, like Aristotle and Epicurus, inclined to this belief and an ancient historian asserts in all earnestness that an inhabitant of the other hemisphere had come to

Carthage to obtain some information about his ancestors who were formerly Carthaginians. These voices from the old world are beginning to be heard anew since the glorious invention of printing bestows upon us afresh every day precious editions of the writings of countless forgotten thinkers. There lies dormant here a well of wisdom also for geographical science which promises to be a veritable fountain of youth for it. The fairy-tale of antiquity is at the least a problem that calls for renewed, serious examination, and I have sought in vain in our sacred writings, which set a boundary to the horizon of the human spirit, for a single word that unconditionally contradicts that belief. There was one word in these researches, however, that rang again and again in my ears as a most stirring exhortation, indeed as a prophecy, a word that constitutes the sacred watchword of our order, of our brethren, nay, of the whole of Christendom: 'Go ye into all the world and preach to the nations!' The profound, inexhaustible meaning of this word seems to stand in mystic connection with those presentiments of the ancient world, like one subterranean water-course with the other, and is it not the will of God that this dream of a larger world should again and again illumine the minds of our seers and poets? I need not remind you of the great Italian Dante, who as you all know lent words to this dream, but just the other day I came across the verses of another Italian poet until then unknown to me, Luigi Pulci, who died as recently as three years ago. They struck me like a flash of lightning and I regard it as nothing less than a mysterious providence that I am allowed to communicate them to you here and now. The poet speaks there of the time when the Pillars of Hercules at the western border of the Mediterranean Sea were still looked upon as the end of the world, and against that superstition he opposes a vision that is verily overwhelming:

'The theory is wrong, for seamen bold  
Will not direct their barks towards the West  
On smooth, flat plains of sea; because the earth  
Is fashioned in the form of a wheel.  
Men of old were straitened in their minds  
And Hercules will with a blush behold  
How far a simple boat will swift outstrip  
The ancient boundaries he set in vain.  
Another hemisphere shall yet be found,  
For the All towards one centre strives;

And Earth in mystery divine is poised  
Well-balanced 'mongst the starry hosts of heaven.  
Cities lie far down beneath our feet  
And mighty kingdoms ne'er before divined.  
But lo! the sun that hurries to the West  
Greets the nations with its longed-for light!'"

The Dominican sat down with an almost challenging composure, but soon there raged round him a violent outburst of cries which the prior allowed to die down without attempting to call to order. A few had jumped up, among them the Franciscan monk and, gathered in a dark window-niche, were engaged in excited talk. Three or four of them spoke at the same time and shouted at the audacious speaker; Columbus seemed to have been quite forgotten. His neighbour whispered to him: "You are lucky Colon! He is a lightning conductor!" Ejaculations like "Fraud! Madness! Insolence! Silly poetic gabble!" mutually outrivalled one another and gradually connected sentences could also be made out, which all came pelting down on the Dominican like well-aimed arrows. "Away with Dante and fellows like him! And what does old Epicurus really say? He is certainly silly enough to believe in a southern hemisphere, but even for him only the northern hemisphere is habitable, and what is supposed to be beyond that he himself calls a chaos, an abyss, an endless waste of water!" "And why didn't your ancient heathen," shouted another, "make a pilgrimage themselves to that promised land? One thing they knew only too well and that was that an impenetrable girdle of flame would burn their ship and their crew to ashes!" "And how long would the voyage be likely to last?" asked a third; "for three years, I reckon; and is there any ship that can carry provisions and water for so long a period, eh?" "You will surely credit us with sufficient common-sense, Brother Fulgentius," said a fourth, "as to see clearly that if the earth is a globe one might be able to sail down into Hades, but certainly not back uphill again." A bishop who was usually only seen in helmet and coat-of-mail at the head of his vassals laughingly struck the table a blow with his hand: "Old Seneca also makes one reference of this kind to another world and he was certainly a driveller like all your philosophers, but now he seems almost reasonable to me, for in one passage he asks ironically: why then did a dauntless hero like Alexander the Great not sail South with his ships? A clever beggar like Alexander stayed comfortably on land, for



eternal night began south of the coast of Africa. And Alexander had a powerful fleet, an abundance of men and boundless wealth. And this new Alexander—where are his ships and his men? We need our men for the fight against Granada, that scandal of Christendom, and we have scarcely enough of them!”

These threatening and jeering rejoinders followed one another in this way until the Franciscan monk stood once more at the upper end of the table and imposed silence on the others with his shrill voice. “Brothers in Christ! Science is the work of man, faith is the work of God! Science may err, the truth is with God alone. The words of our Evangelists and saints, God’s warriors, triumphantly overcame the heathenism of the old world, and they will also carry the Cross victoriously today against the flaunting banners of a new world. It is not Ptolemy who gives the decision, our greatest philosopher and Church Father Augustine condemns the belief in the so-called antipodes as heresy, for in these outlandish zones there must be people who do not spring from Adam. The Bible teaches, however, that all human beings descend from our first parents. Does Sennor Colon by any chance wish us to believe that a second Noah’s ark floated westwards? The Bible knows of no second ark. And is not the picture of the world so clearly drawn in the writings of the Old and New Testament that nothing is left for the presumptuous subtlety of sophistical philosophers to twist out of its original meaning? The sky, as the Psalms proclaim, is stretched out like a covering, like the roof of a tent, which among nomadic tribes was made of animals’ hides. Would a tent be erected over a globe? And Saint Paul likewise in his Epistle to the Hebrews compares the sky to a tabernacle or tent spread over the earth, which therefore must always have been, and will always continue to be, a flat though irregular surface. These are the questions to which we require this Apostle of a New World to give an answer!”

The prior looked down the table towards Columbus, and his words uttered in a loud voice dripped slowly into the silence: “Time presses, Sennor Colon, if you please!”

Columbus rose slowly. The excitement he felt at first had subsided and had given place to a sort of stupor from which the prior’s summons now roused him. Bitter words pressed for utterance and he felt a void within him like a dried-up well. The hour of decision that seemed so near had vanished like a ship on the horizon. But before him there grew up a primeval

forest, an undergrowth of stupidity, ignorance, spite, jealousy, intolerance and intellectual indolence, which he had expected to find least of all in the chief citadel of Spanish science. For a fight he had been ready, for a fight with chivalrous and perhaps superior opponents, but it was windmills that were revolving before him, though a blow from them might prove fatal once he was induced to come within reach of their wings. So he began to speak, slowly at first and with hesitation:

"I have sought to combine all that was accessible to me of the knowledge of this world in the maps, the calculations and the comprehensive sketches I have prepared for their illustrious majesties, with whom I was deemed worthy to co-operate. I know how great my debt is to others, to the great scholars of the past and present. I am conscious of my shortcomings, and I have never boasted of my erudition; be it far from me to wish to compare myself in any way with any one of you in this assembly. Not a few books have been at my disposal in my study of this subject, but perhaps I read them with other eyes, with the eyes of one who has looked about him in the world and has sought the solution of many of its enigmas by pondering over them myself, since book-knowledge gave me no help. I travelled on land and I always saw the peaks of the mountains rising first above the horizon; I sailed on ships and I always saw the pennant on the highest mast sinking last beneath the surface of the sea. That we walk here and everywhere on the upper surface of a globe was already a matter of course to me before I knew that any other opinion about the question existed. The sacred books of our Church have been my life-long companions, and when my acquaintance with the views of scientists raised the first doubts concerning the possibility of my idea, I sought and found encouragement in these sacred writings themselves and I was confirmed in my belief that this segment to which the world has hitherto been limited must be rounded out into a globe. 'For behold I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind,' says the prophet Isaiah, and lest it might be presumptuous to search for this new earth, the word of the Psalmist has always reassured me: 'The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's, but the earth hath He given to the children of men.' I know not what awaits the man who first makes the voyage to the West. But one thing I am certain of: I have voyaged as an ordinary seaman on the coast

of Africa as far as Guinea, which extends beyond the dreaded equator, and I have nowhere discovered any trace of a zone of fire that makes it impossible to advance any farther. On the contrary, I found everywhere nothing but increasing fertility, a superabundance of the means of existence and of human beings, and I would not be standing here today, if the wind had not filled my sail and the sea had not borne me back in the same manner on my return journey as on my voyage thither. Hence I am convinced that in the Far West and South riches are to be found of which even Marco Polo's accounts only gave an inadequate description. But what country has a higher call to bring these boundless realms under its influence and to bear the light of the Gospel to the whole earth than the kingdom of Their Catholic Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella, a kingdom that has become for me a second native land? I have grown up battling with wind and sea and I feel myself most at home where waves and tempests are to be turned to account, and overcome. The rest is a matter of courage and of unswerving trust in God."

The speaker had got rid of his original embarrassment and he was no longer afraid to look his hearers in the eyes. But only a few of them, and these mainly brothers of the Dominican cloister itself, listened with their faces turned in his direction and were evidently gripped by his words. The others sat absorbed in themselves, listless and impassive, like the senators of Rome when Brennus burst into the forum. Columbus breathed deeply once or twice and meant to speak of the practical methods of carrying out his scheme. Then a sonorous peal was heard outside; it was the ringing of the Vesper bell. The seated figures rose, most of them clutching their breviaries from their pockets. The sitting of the conference was over, and everyone pushed his way to the door.

Only the Dominican librarian stayed behind for a few moments, evidently in lively conversation with several of the Brothers, when the Franciscan monk went up to him hurriedly and hissed in his ear: "Brother Fulgentius the next time you quote that Italian Pulci, don't forget that he puts those verses that you read on the lips of the *devil*!" He spat the word "devil" straight in his face, and before the man whom he addressed could master his evident surprise, he turned and disappeared in the darkness. On the other side of the table, however, the prior walked up to Columbus with ponderous step, and, laying his hand encouragingly on his

shoulder, he said in a voice loud enough to be heard by all who were passing: "Fiat lux in perpetuis!" (Let there be light to all eternity!) In the breast of Columbus disappointment and indignation fought for the mastery, and tears stood in his eyes. Profoundly moved he bent over the prior's other hand and softly answered: "Amen!" Then he too followed the other and went up to his cell.

## CHAPTER XI

### AWAITING THE DECISION

THESE deliberations in Salamanca lasted several weeks and subjected Columbus to a theologico-scientific cross-examination in which any rash word could transform his questioners into judges in a case of heresy, but the conclusion arrived at is uncertain, for there is no record of it at all. Apparently the majority rejected the project of Columbus, but the minority consisted of men whose opinion was of much greater weight and could not simply be passed over. The decision was therefore indefinitely postponed. The realization of the plan was not to be thought of before the end of the Moorish war, and to this Columbus had willy nilly to submit. He is said to have remained for a year in the vicinity of Salamanca at a country seat that belonged to the cloister of San Esteban. From there he went in the autumn of 1487 to Cordova and a few months later to Seville. At the solicitation of the Prior de Deza, who continued to be his zealous supporter, he received a subsidy from the Court again in 1488. This enabled him to visit his brother Bartolomeo in Lisbon, who in all likelihood introduced him to Bartolomeu Diaz, the discoverer of the Cape of Good Hope. He now heard either from Diaz himself, or from his brother, how successful the voyage to the south point of Africa had been and how bitterly disappointed the Portuguese discoverer had been that he had not been allowed to venture a voyage up from there in a north-easterly direction to where the promised land was to be found. The door to India so long blocked by the continent of Africa that lay in front of it, would at once be opened, and, if Diaz had his will, a flotilla would set out at any hour to make a final attempt to reach the goal that had been their quest for so many years. But Diaz met with unbelievable opposition at the Portuguese Colonial Office; he was put off from week to week with unintelligible excuses, and when he was all anxiety to follow the route he had discovered to its triumphant conclusion the authorities in Lisbon suddenly became very leisurely. The truth was they meant to entrust the

undertaking to someone else, because King John did not wish to be indebted to one man alone, who might then even make such claims as Columbus had put forward on a former occasion. The fresh offers he is said to have made to the latter led to no result. Had he any idea of replacing Diaz by "our personal friend in Seville?" Columbus, however, had some important discussions with his brother. Shortly after this Bartolomeo went to England and, on the strength of a new map of the world he had drawn after his voyage to the south point of Africa, he was able to obtain an audience that proved of some value with King Henry VII. He is also said to have put his brother's plan before him, but to have found very little appreciation of it.

From Lisbon Columbus hurried back to Cordova, where he found himself bound with quite different fetters: he had a mistress there, the handsome Donna Beatrix Enriquez, who is said to have been of gentle birth, and who, on the 15th August 1488, became the mother of his second son Fernando, afterwards his biographer. We should have known nothing of this lady had not Columbus mentioned her in his will. In that document he charged his son Diego, for whom he had the same affection as for his younger brothers, to take particular care of Beatrix Enriquez, the mother of Don Fernando: "I desire," so runs the provision, "that he should give her enough to enable her to live in a manner befitting her rank, in consideration that she is one towards whom I have many obligations to fulfil. Let this be done, so that my conscience may be disburdened; for this matter lies heavily on my heart, though this is not the proper place to make a more explicit statement regarding it." Apart from this he never even mentioned this lady.

Columbus is likely to have utilized this time of idle waiting to plunge afresh into the study of those works which he had come to regard as his allies, especially the new book of cardinal d'Ailly, *Imago mundi*, whose mystical theology from then onwards increasingly captivated him. The religious aspect of his scheme was thrust completely into the foreground and the religious zeal that smouldered throughout the whole of Spain caught hold of him also. (It flared up in numberless *auto-da-fés*, in which Moors, Jews and other heretics found a horrible death.) It showed white-hot in the inhuman atrocities for which an embittered and ruthless war gave ample occasion, nay further, which such a war made it a matter of duty to commit. There was no quarter for the enemy,

his fate was either death or slavery; extermination of the infidels was the war-cry of the victors. Toleration for those of another faith was a crime, fanaticism became a safeguard against the suspicions of the inquisitors. It was the dark spirit of that age, which oppressed Spain in particular and infected everything like a spiritual pestilence.

The war against the Moors dragged on. The whole province of Granada as far as the coast was made a fortress by mountains that were difficult of access. On the 18th August 1487 the Spaniards won Malaga and thus closed in the enemy from the west. The following summer passed in a war for position that had no result. The plan to push forward in the east of Granada fell through and had to be postponed till the following year. Columbus waited. In May 1489 the Court took up residence in Cordova itself and it suddenly seemed as though he were being seriously kept in mind. He received a command to betake himself to Seville where renewed conferences were to be held. At the same time an injunction was issued on the 12th May granting Christobal Colon, as he had called himself for some years, free domicile, but not free board, on all the property belonging to the state and the Crown. This privilege made it somewhat easier to follow the Court, which was in constant touch with the army and, according to its movements, shifted from city to city. But nothing came of the deliberations at Seville; little time could be spared, for until the autumn every means was to be used to force a decision at the seat of war. The siege of Baza in the east of Granada began. Under pressure from the queen the siege was not raised in the autumn, as was usual on other occasions; preparations were made for a winter campaign, and on the 4th December the Crescent was hauled down from the magnificent mosque of the city and the Cross was raised in its stead. The star of Islam that had shone over Spain for eight centuries seemed now at last to be sinking.

Columbus himself had taken part as a soldier in the siege of Baza, and here he witnessed an incident which made the deepest impression both on him and on the queen, whose spirit was entirely in accord with his. Two barefooted monks from the cloister of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem suddenly appeared in the Spanish camp. One of them was the guardian of the cloister and he brought a message from the Sultan of Egypt which consisted in a threat that he would slaughter all the christians in Egypt, Syria and Palestine and have all the holy sites effaced

from the earth, unless the Catholic monarchs ceased at once from their campaign against the followers of the prophet. The threat was of no avail, nor was it carried out, but the fate of the Holy Land was thereby suddenly linked in the closest way with the great task that awaited its triumphant achievement at the hands of Ferdinand and Isabella. Both Columbus and Isabella saw in this a sign from Heaven that they were to have in that task a still more lofty aim. The expulsion of the Moors from Spain was only the first part of their life-work; it was to be crowned by a new crusade and by the liberation of the Holy Land from the dominion of Islam! The state's coffers were alarmingly empty, but beyond the ocean glittered the gold of enormously wealthy lands that only waited for hands to seize it and that would make its possessor the lord of the world. From that day onwards Isabella and Columbus were at one in resolving to direct this much-desired river of gold towards Spain and to transform it into weapons and soldiers for the purpose of rescuing at last the land of the Saviour, the sites of His birth, of His earthly sojourn and of His death from the thralldom of the infidels and also of preaching there the Word of God among the heathen.

But meanwhile the hoard of gold was still in the far distance, and in Spain itself the hands of those who longed for it were dripping with the blood of enemies who entrenched themselves with desperate tenacity in every mountain gorge and whose chief seat, the city of Granada, seemed unapproachable. Until that was in the hands of the Spaniards, no end to the war could be foreseen. And in the meantime two more years slipped past. But as Colon's task became greater his torturing impatience also grew to the point of irascibility. During this time he remained in the vicinity of the royal encampment and no doubt also took part in martial operations. But he seized every opportunity of reminding the queen of his task, the task they had in common, and as he always received the same answer—"Wait!" he lost patience in the end and suddenly left the Court with the resolve to turn to France with his project. There King Charles VII offered him encouraging prospects and appears to have invited him to Paris. Writing to King Ferdinand in 1505 he reminds him that he had received no less than three letters of invitation from foreign princes and that nevertheless he had decided in favour of Spain. The late Queen Isabella, he said, had seen these letters and also a Dr. Villalon, who no doubt was a witness living at the time. In all



likelihood the reference is to the invitation of the King of Portugal, to a letter of Henry VII, who, as a matter of fact, hurriedly sent out ships after the success of Columbus and through John Cabot secured the continent of North America for England, and to the King of France's invitation, which according to Fernando Colón's assertion is said to have reached him.

The road to France led him back again to Palos, where he meant to take ship. But his son Diego was still in La Rábida; he wanted to see him again before he parted from him without knowing when he might return. So once more he turned his steps to the cloister, perhaps even in the secret hope that for the second time his fortune might take a change there for the better. What in the end awaited him at a foreign Court? All that he had won despite everything after six years of unwearied patience—credit, acceptance, co-operation, appreciation—all these he would have to raise again from the first stone, perhaps with greater labour, in another country. Would his power of endurance, would his lifetime itself, be equal to that?

These tormenting questions which kept him company on the road to La Rábida, are also asked by his two friends Juan Perez and Antonio de Marchena when, dejected and at odds with his fate, he seeks refuge with them for the second time. They are able to prevail upon him in the first place at least to remain in the cloister and take counsel with them. A physician in Palos, Don Garcia Fernandez is asked to join them and he brings with him a ship-owner, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, who is fortunately at home just now. He has made many an adventurous voyage along with his brothers and is not easily scared at any enterprise. He hears of the plan for the first time and in a trice he is enthusiastic for it: he is the right man for this, he has vessels, he has money, he will go with him! And forthwith they are all agreed that Columbus should on no account leave Spain and that a final attempt should still be made, before making further plans and setting off, if need be, on their own responsibility. The prior Juan Perez now writes personally to the queen, who apparently knows nothing yet of her protégé's absence and he beseeches her not to let this great enterprise slip from her grasp. A seaman from Palos, Rodriguez, sets out on the journey and conveys the letter to the camp at Santa Fé, where everything has been gathered for a final assault on Granada and where any day may see the victory of the Cross over the Crescent. In the very midst of the martial turmoil the

queen swiftly makes up her mind and the doughty Rodriguez hurries to La Rábida with her answer: the fall of Granada is immediately impending, till then Columbus must have patience; after that, however, she intends to have three ships equipped for him; in the meantime she assigns fifty-three ducats for him—a larger sum than he had received altogether during all those years—with this money he is to procure suitable garments for himself and then return to the Court!

A decision at last! And three ships! Three ships to the fairy lands of the Orient, the country of the gold by means of which a new temple of Solomon is to be built, the temple of a Christendom that shall extend among the heathen from one end of the earth to the other!

## CHAPTER XII

### THE AGREEMENT

ON the 2nd January 1492 Granada was surrendered at last, and the last Moorish king in Spain handed over the keys of the city to the victorious monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella with the words: "They belong to you, O king, since Allah has ordained it; make a mild and moderate use of your good fortune!" The conditions of the surrender were more humane than those at the conquest of Baza two years before, but the proverbial "Spanish perfidy" took care that these conditions were soon abrogated.

Columbus took part in the entry of Ferdinand and Isabella into the Alhambra, and as early as February the recently appointed archbishop of Granada, Fernando de Talavera, was commissioned to come to an agreement with him in Santa Fé regarding the projected voyage. Talavera himself was of humble origin, but from the secure height of his present position he could afford to treat this ordinary seaman as a worthless upstart, since he had always privately considered him a prattler, a visionary, or even an impostor. When Columbus now stated the conditions that were to hold good in the event of his enterprise being successful and handed them to him in a carefully written document, he did not know whether to give vent to his rage at such presumption or to pity the fool whose head had plainly been turned by ambition. This starveling without a fatherland, this pauper, ought to be glad that he was allowed to serve the king. Instead of that he not only demanded a huge reward in the form of a share in the present and future profit of the undertaking, a regular "tithe" such as only the Church claimed, but also honours and dignities for himself and his family to last till the day of Judgment! This vagabond went so far as to wish to found something like a Colon dynasty—it was positively an impudent joke! Castile was making itself ridiculous before the whole world by this affair! And instead of being content with the salary of a captain or ultimately of an admiral, this man meant to amass riches, although he did not contribute a penny from his empty pockets for the financing

of the undertaking! It was utterly opposed to every principle of what was after all the recognised, capitalistic world-system, which conferred on the original possessors alone the right of adding still more to what they already held. But Columbus stuck to his demands—the man who created boundless wealth out of nothing and presented it to a nation had surely a claim not to come out of the affair empty-handed. Perhaps, too, he was alluding to the boundless insolence of the *hidalgos* who hung about the Court, living at its expense, and who would have been rather embarrassed had they been asked what services they had rendered their country. And finally, so far as the question of capital was concerned, he was prepared to be responsible for an eighth part of the expense in return for a corresponding share in the total gain. The archbishop had evidently expected that least of all. Probably assurances given by the ship-owner Pinzon in Palos, who was a well-to-do man, had put Columbus in the position of being able to close the mouth of the clerical gentleman with this offer.

Neither amiable nor angry words were of any avail. Columbus stuck stubbornly to his claim; he could not imagine that he was to be denied a share in an achievement which after all could be accomplished in its entirety by him alone and which, in the event of his succeeding, would mean a gift that no subject ever before had laid at the feet of a sovereign. But the archbishop remained just as stubborn and played the part of an obstinate hucksterer, although he ought to have been more concerned with the salvation of those millions of heathen, whose conversion moreover could not be brought about without a monetary sacrifice and was a task that ought not to be undertaken merely for the sake of wordly gain. He broke off the negotiations, and in his report to the royal couple he ascribed the claims of his opponent in the bargaining to personal greed and presumption, giving them such a sinister aspect that it was resolved to give up the whole enterprise, without regard to the promise which Isabella had given Columbus in her letter to La Rábida. The plan seemed to be irretrievably wrecked, and now Columbus was at the end of his tether. Here in Spain he could no longer count on loyalty and good faith; the great task to be fulfilled, the liberation of the Holy Land, was not taken seriously. The boundless riches he hoped to find on the other side of the ocean were to be used for this purpose and he was determined to make the attainment

of this object secure by means of an agreement. Only one loop-hole was left now—a trial at the French Court, and once more he made ready for the journey.

In all probability he informed his two chief supporters, the Finance Minister Quintanilla and the Treasurer of Arragon, of his intention. They both implored the queen not to let him depart a second time. They pointed out to her how small the risk was and how great on the other hand the gain might possibly be—a gain, too, that the state's coffers urgently needed; they made it plain to her that Columbus demanded nothing if he returned empty-handed, but that, if he came back in triumph he would have richly earned the honours and dignities that he claimed, since there was really no scale with which to measure the magnitude of his enterprise. These words re-awakened the fear that the richest source of gold in the world might fall into the hands of another state, and since their opinion as financiers was so emphatic, the archbishop had to strike his sails. The king was convinced by the financial and political arguments of his counsellors, the queen by the idea that a great work was to be done for the glory of the Most High. Her private secretary Juan de Coloma therefore received the order to conclude the agreement with Columbus according to the wishes of the latter.

At that very hour, however, Columbus had left the city and was on the road to Cordova. A courier was sent after him at once, and he overtook Columbus two miles from Santa Fé. When he was assured that all his claims would be granted, he returned with the messenger and in the audience that followed Queen Isabella endeavoured by being specially amiable to him, to make amends for the bitterly painful experiences of the previous days.

In consequence of this the agreement was now concluded between Columbus and the royal consorts on the 17th April 1492 and it contained the following five conditions:

1. Columbus receives for himself during his lifetime and for his heirs and successors to all time coming, the dignity of an Admiral in all the countries and kingdoms which he will discover or conquer in the Ocean, together with honours and prerogatives equal to those which the High Admiral of Castile possesses in his department.

2. He will become viceroy and governor of all the aforesaid countries and kingdoms, with the privilege of proposing candid-

ates for the governorship of each island or province, from whom the sovereigns shall choose one.

3. He is entitled to retain, after deducting a sum for expenses, a tenth part of all pearls, jewels, gold, silver, spices, as well as of all articles of trade and merchandise of whatsoever kind, that shall be found, brought, bartered or gained in the department of his admiralty.

4. He or his representative is the sole judge in all processes and disputes that shall arise out of the trade between those regions and Spain, in exactly the same manner as the High Admiral of Castile who exercises a similar jurisdiction in his district.

5. Columbus is responsible now and to all time coming for an eighth part of the expense of equipping the ships for this voyage of discovery and also receives in return an eighth part of the gain.

The letters patent of the 30th April, also signed by Ferdinand and Isabella, finally give a further explanation of the dignities and privileges enjoyed by a viceroy and governor and expressly declare that the title to be conferred on him shall be inherited by his family.

Were these conditions really so unprecedented as many historians think they are, who cannot conceive of the relations of Columbus to the Spanish Court in any other way than that of a commercial traveller who merely carries out the orders of his employers? But even the commercial traveller of today is paid on the basis of "commission" on turnover and not merely of profits which otherwise might easily trickle away in expenses. Perhaps these conditions were novel and on the whole represented the first regular compact on the footing of service and equivalent for service rendered, which had ever been concluded between a seaman and his employer. The king of Portugal would have nothing to do with conditions such as these; it was his custom to distribute the work among those who after all were indispensable to him, so that none of them would grow too strong for him. Columbus had learned a lesson from his experience in Lisbon and from that of his colleague Diaz in the same city. But these conditions were by no means so unprecedented as not to become, after a short time, the general rule, even in Portugal itself! It had long been the practice in the Portuguese Colonial Office to appoint the discoverers of islands as their governors and even to make that office

hereditary, and this rule soon became universal. When Henry VII of England, whom the Spanish successes now kept awake at night, sent out in 1496 a fellow-countryman of Columbus, Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) of Genoa, on voyages of discovery "in the East, West and North," by the so-called "patent" of the 5th March 1496 he made him and his sons beforehand governors of the islands, etc., which they might be in a position to conquer and possess. Included among these was the continent of North America, which Cabot, who exactly like Columbus was searching for Cathay (China) and the east coast of Asia, was the first to reach on the 24th June 1497. The keener the desire for colonial possessions grew, the higher rose the prices that were paid for fresh discoveries. On the 12th May 1500 King Manuel of Portugal granted letters patent to the mariner Gaspar Corte-Real. In this document it was stipulated "freely and unconditionally in our name and in the name of our successors" that in compensation for the sacrifices and dangers which he incurred there should be conferred *on him and on his heirs* "the privileges of governorship, with its ensuing prerogatives, over all possible islands and mainlands which he may find and discover," and that "the *fourth* part of all that the aforesaid islands and mainlands produced should for all time be apportioned to the said Corte-Real!" And after Vasco de Gama reached India in 1498 by the route that Diaz had opened up, and on his second voyage had established the rule of the Portuguese in that country, it was not he, it is true, but his descendant Francisco d'Almeida who became in 1505 the first viceroy of India and the practice was adopted of not allowing any governor to hold a post so far from the mother land, without possessing the rights of a royal deputy. Columbus had rightly foreseen this, and his demands were perhaps nothing more than the first model which princes jealous of their rights would in a short time have to imitate, if everything was not to be at sixes and sevens in their new possessions on the other side of the ocean. Neither of the two parties to the agreement had any idea that he would find, instead of China and perhaps a few hundred islands, an unknown continent more than four times as large as the whole of Europe.

The only other objection that is left is that a man just as low-born as the archbishop of Talavera was should claim this honour for himself, although he was precisely the man who had the crucial idea, the creative will and the keen eye for what was

necessary; and this is an objection that is made by those who alongside of it stress with admiration the fact that under Napoleon every common soldier carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack. The viceroyalty that Columbus claimed could only exist after the islands and continents that he was to govern had been found. Their discovery after all was his own idea which no one else had suggested to him and its realization is to his credit. The time came soon enough when Court favourites who had not stirred a finger were graciously permitted to reap what others had sown at the risk of their lives.

But Columbus made still another demand and this also was conceded in the second patent of the 30th April. He received the title of admiral and Don, which put him on the same level as the highest nobility of Spain—but all this only in the event of his achieving the aim of his enterprise. Not until he set foot on the first bit of terra firma on the other side of the ocean did he become admiral and Don. When he bade farewell to the Court on the 17th May in order to equip his vessels in Palos, he was still nothing more than "our captain Christobal Colon." He had first to earn that reward, but he placed a legitimate value on it. During the years he spent at the Spanish Court, a beggar, stamped as such by his clothing, he had to submit without defence to the arrogance of the Spanish nobility. He had seen how often desert and good fortune were strangely linked—or rather were unwilling to meet one another. He had had enough of those *hidalgos* whose only argument was to grip their sword and who looked upon all work as a degradation and as the duty of slaves. If his enterprise succeeded he would have constant dealings with courtiers and royal officials, many of whom would despise or envy him, but who would nevertheless be under him. His title of nobility only to a certain degree made up for what he lacked in genuine blue blood, and his position would be undermined when any *hidalgo* ventured to look down on him. Was he to wait quietly until these honours were spontaneously bestowed upon him as an act of grace after the accomplished fact? He had studied life at Courts for twenty years and "Spanish perfidy" was not unknown to him. And finally it was a vigorous remnant of doubtless very inopportune plebeian pride that drove him to demand as a right an honour which in other cases was usually conferred as an act of royal grace—or was withheld even from the highest merit.



The explicit appointment of a viceroy and governor, however, transformed this agreement into a characteristic political document. Viceroy, governor—of what? The object of the voyage across the ocean was in the first place the establishing of business relations with the opulent countries which Marco Polo had described. They had long been ruled by kings who were subject to a Grand Khan, or Kings of Kings. According to Toscanelli's assertion Christians already existed in groups scattered throughout these countries and the kings were only waiting for a Christian teacher who was to convert their peoples to the faith of the West. There is no longer any mention in the agreement of this essential object of the voyage; instead of that it refers to conquests that are to be made in the service of their Catholic Majesties, for a government would be required only for territories that had been conquered and annexed. The intention was to settle on these distant coasts, just as Portugal had extended its possessions along the coast of Africa. But this was inhabited by savage tribes, while in the East there was a nation of millions with an ancient civilization, who were capable also of waging war, and who would certainly not allow themselves to be treated in the same way as negroes and cannibals. Nevertheless these unknown lands and "kingdoms" were placed beforehand under the rule of Spain, and Columbus had not only to discover but also to "conquer" them. Evidently very little trust was placed in the inclination to Christianity shown by the Grand Khan, his subsidiary kings and their people, and arrangements were made in advance for the event of their refusing to embrace the faith. Countries and nations who opposed the introduction of Christianity were regarded, according to the prevailing ideas, as the immediate spoil of their Christian conquerors. The letters patent to John Cabot already mentioned authorized him to discover and conquer "all islands, countries, territories, provinces that belong to heathens or unbelievers in any part of the earth whatsoever, which has hitherto been unknown to all Christians." Accordingly the only rights that were respected were those of any Christian conqueror who had made an earlier arrival. Since moreover the conversion of the heathen was a Christian duty which was taken in earnest especially if there was a promise of substantial business, and since the most effective medium for the fulfilment of this duty was also the right one, the countries which were to be converted were first of all annexed and conquered. After the discovery of gunpowder Europe was infinitely superior

to the rest of the world in the progressive invention of lethal weapons. And Columbus was too much the child of his age not to put the accomplishment of his religious task before all other purely humane considerations. His three ships were scouts preparing for the founding of a colonial realm under Spanish rule.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THREE SHIPS PUT TO SEA

THE Sunday High Mass in the Church of St. George at Palos was over and the worshippers with the fumes of the incense still clinging to them were pushing their way hurriedly out of the low doorway into the open. But they did not disperse into the adjacent streets; they gathered in groups here and there and the confused sound of voices heard on every side showed that something out of the ordinary had happened. After the service, in addition to the usual announcements of the alcalde, the chief magistrate of the town, the notary public of Palos had read out a royal decree to the effect that the town had within ten days of that date, the 25th March, to get ready for sea the two ships, armed caravels, which the royal council some time previously had commanded them by a legal writ to put at the disposal of the Crown for a year, as a punishment for their disobedience and insubordination. The city of Seville would furnish victuals and weapons, and the ships were to be handed over at the proper time fully equipped to the royal Captain Christobal Colon, who by order of the government of Castile would come to Palos and take up his abode at the cloister of La Rábida. The ships and crews had unquestioningly to obey his orders to sail to wherever he chose to take them, with the exception of the Portuguese colonies on the coast of Africa, a domain they were ordered most rigorously to avoid. The announcement had just been affixed to the church door, and some men familiar with handwriting went up to it in order once again to read, with their fingers tracing the lines, the almost indecipherable flourishing legal script of the notary's clerk. Then they separated to join the various excited groups.

The majority of the church-goers were women clad in their oppressive Sunday finery, and each of them according to her means, wore a valuable veil of black lace. The men of Palos were mostly at sea and those who were at home stood in silence at the centre of the crowds of women. They shrugged their shoulders, shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other, then with the

rolling gait of the seaman approached some comrade and companion in misfortune near them, who was just as puzzled as they were themselves about the attitude they were to adopt with regard to this unusual order to report themselves for duty. But it plainly applied to all who happened to be at home, and, thanks to the stupidity of their chief magistrate, it was quite true about this sentence of the royal council. Nothing could be done about that. But to what port were they supposed to sail? Evidently to some place pretty far away, otherwise they would not come near the Portuguese colonies. Did the brothers Pinzon know anything about this? The Pinzons were standing apart with their wives and children, apparently waiting on someone. They too shrugged their shoulders, but they did so in their usual superior manner, for they were among the few well-to-do people in the town. And who, in the world, might this captain be? He lived at La Rábida, did he? The prior Juan Perez had certainly been at church, in company with a stranger. After the service they had both gone to see the priest in the sacristy, and now the three of them, with the notary following, were just stepping out from the church door. They all knew the prior, and had he not been in company with a stranger many of them would have willingly greeted him and exchanged a few words with him. But on this occasion they only doffed their brilliant red Sunday caps and some of them turned round towards him—a gesture to which he responded with a friendly smile. The stranger no doubt was this mysterious Captain Christobal Colon, whose name they had never heard before. And the Pinzons evidently knew more about the affair, for they went up to the two clerics and greeted the stranger as though he were an old acquaintance. The remainder of the Sunday passed in restless activity, and one wife after another dinned into her husband's ears the advice to get himself out of sight as quickly as possible and make sure that he did not come under the eyes of the alcalde, for anyone who courted danger must expect to come to grief by it. But the husbands shook their heads thoughtfully, not knowing which way to turn, for a royal order like that one was no joke.

On the following day, however; the restlessness rose to angry excitement. The municipal authorities accompanied by the outlandish captain were inspecting the ships lying in the harbour with a view to selecting the two that were most seaworthy, and now the goal of this forced voyage could no longer be kept a secret.

In what direction were the ships to sail? Westwards, keeping always straight on, across a sea of bad repute, to lands of which nothing was known, whose existence even was only surmised? Assuredly no one would ever come back from them. Was this captain mad? And were they to allow themselves simply to be ordered to do a thing like that? They were certainly well enough accustomed to the caprice of the government, but this was going beyond all bounds! And the staunchest seamen left everything lying on their vessels and hurried home to tell their families the dreadful news and to contrive the best means of evading the royal press-gang.

The owners of the ships opened their eyes still more widely. The town was to defray the expenses; well and good! In the meantime they were to receive hire for two months and increased seamen's wages were to be paid for four months, while the town had made itself answerable for any damages. But their ships were certain to be lost completely on such a senseless expedition, and surely no one would expect that of them! They needed their ships, and if it came to an action for damages afterwards, they might easily ruin themselves with lawsuits before they saw a farthing. The king couldn't make such an inhuman and impossible demand. And after all there was no disengaged ship seaworthy enough for such an adventurous voyage. One of them had been hired a long time ago for a contract on the first of next month and the other was in such a bad state that it would take weeks to put it in repair. Besides it would have to be seen whether a sufficient crew would offer themselves at all for such a fatal voyage—there might be a long time to wait for that. Of course—there were a couple of old wrecks there, that had lain for years in the mud of the harbour at ebb-tide. If the town were willing to do them up a bit, it would not be difficult to come to some agreement in regard to their worth as mere timber. In short—there was not a single vessel to be had, and the alcalde reported this fact to the government.

Several weeks passed in tense expectation. Had the insane plan been abandoned? But Captain Colon showed himself frequently in the streets and went back and forth to the house of the Pinzons. If they did not mind risking a ship so much the better, but small traders, whose profits had been going down and down as a result of the war, ought to be left in peace. So everyone who could find any reason for vanishing with his ship from the harbour

paid extra money to secure the least remunerative commission and in this way to save his skin. Palos was deserted.

But the government was really not joking. On the 20th June a second and more emphatic order was issued to all the municipal authorities on the coast of Andalusia—to commandeered suitable ships wherever they were to be found and to compel their owners and crews to put themselves under the command of Captain Colon. A royal official was authorized to carry out this order rigorously. He had arrived in person, and Palos and Moguer were to pay his daily expenses until everything was ready for the voyage.

The affair had now become serious and something was bound to happen. The ship-owners looked at the matter from every point of view; each one wished to leave it to the other to take the first step. Not until Martin Pinzon explained that he and his brothers were to accompany the expedition, and that the ships would therefore be in capable hands, was a ship-owner named Quintero ready to hand over the *Pinta*, a caravel of 150 tons. If the three Pinzons were to take part in the voyage and had suddenly become even wildly enthusiastic over this hair-raising enterprise, then there must certainly be immense profits to be got out of it. Martin Pinzon also took over at once the command of the *Pinta*, and his brother Francisco superintended the preparations as his chief officer. Part of the equipment and the provisions had been lying for some weeks in the shed of the custom-house.

Further the *Santa Maria*, a capacious, high-quartered cargo ship, which had lately returned from Flanders, was in the harbour. It belonged to the distinguished Juan de la Cosa, afterwards celebrated as a cartographer. As the alcalde had ferreted out, he lived just a few hours' journey away at Niebla on the Rio Tinto. The ship certainly was not altogether to the liking of Columbus; it was rather clumsy and had too deep a draught. Off unknown coasts vessels had to be flat-bottomed enough to be able to clear unseen reefs or sandbanks. But if he was too fastidious he would never be able to move out of the bit. So he took the *Santa Maria* as his flag ship, and the owner was ordered by the authorities to put his vessel, himself and his crew at the disposal of Columbus in accordance with the royal decree. La Cosa did not take long to be persuaded; the foolhardiness and the novelty of the enterprise fascinated him; he was prepared to hand over the command of the ship to Columbus and to accompany him as his

chief officer. He had also brought with him without delay a skilled pilot named Sancho Ruiz.

The two ships were now to hand. Were they enough? If any mishap befel one of them, the other would be left to its own resources and would have to accommodate both crews. That seemed much too risky. Search was therefore made for a third ship. That, too, was found—the *Niña*, the *Little One*, a ship of only 100 tons burden. It would be available, however, as a last resource, and it sailed quite as fast as the *Pinta*. Columbus had hired this ship himself, for he had had to be responsible for an eighth part of the equipment. Martin Pinzon, who as one of the principal people in the town apparently did not trust the coercive measures adopted by the authorities, is said to have advanced him the money needed for this, in return for a share of the profit. Since Pinzon had shown such eagerness and had proved himself to be a thoroughly reliable and capable man, Columbus had no misgivings about putting himself in a position involving financial dependence on a subordinate and gratitude to him, which would of necessity have very unfortunate results in the event of any differences of opinion that might occur. But as he had undertaken, certainly rather prematurely, to provide an eighth part of the expenses he could not draw back now. It is true that these amounted in all to no more than about £1500, but he did not possess a penny, and Pinzon had positively forced him to take the sum that was required. It would have hurt him to have his magnanimous offer refused, and had Pinzon not had this prospect of making considerable profit from the undertaking, he would in the end have lost all desire to make the voyage with him. Apparently the owner of the *Pinta* already regretted his willingness to hand over his ship, for there were disputes with him every day. Columbus had thus to depend all the more on Pinzon's assistance. The owner of the *Niña* also wanted to sail with them on his ship as *maestre* (ship-master) and to have his brother Pedro with him as pilot; Vicente Pinzon was in command.

Columbus had thus at his disposal three ships which, when put into thoroughly good repair, appeared sufficiently seaworthy to undertake the voyage. They were all three-masters with decks and were provided, both fore and aft, with a tower-like erection—the so-called “castle”—for captain and pilot. Everything was forward—outfit, provisions, weapons, guns, numerous casks of beads, small bells and similar trinkets, with which the

Portuguese were accustomed to allure the negroes of Africa—the crew alone could not be brought up to the full muster. The authorities had to employ the most drastic measures to collect the requisite number of men. In Palos and Moguer especially no volunteers offered for service on any of the ships, even although this Captain Colon made them the most extravagant promises. In this connection as well Pinzon's influence and personal knowledge were of service, but in the end persons offering themselves, who had reasons for avoiding the courts of their native land, had to be gladly accepted. In anticipation of this a government decree was issued postponing any criminal proceedings against all who answered the king's call until two months after their return. All in all the tally was successfully brought up to a hundred and fifty men, seventy of whom were to man the flag ship. Among these were included several royal officials, the Chief Inspector Rodrigo Sanchez, Diego de Arana as justiciary, the royal notary Rodrigo de Escovedo, a doctor, a surgeon, a priest, Pedro de Arenas, with whom Columbus is said to have formed a friendship during his stay in Genoa in 1485. A goldsmith, too, as a connoisseur of precious metals was not forgotten. 4

The work of putting the ships in order also caused a great deal of trouble. The men were lazy and used every means to delay the work. Perhaps at the last moment this blasphemous enterprise, in which so many lives were to be risked, would be abandoned. This had already led to heated discussions with the brothers Pinzon. They meant well by hurrying on the work, but the commander-in-chief had too great a responsibility to be satisfied with mere haste. After all he alone foresaw what the three ships would have to accomplish, and every nail that was not well driven home caused him uneasiness. The caulking of the ships especially was done in a very perfunctory manner, but when he remonstrated with the men about this, they were silently defiant and left the work just as it stood. Pinzon had constantly to persuade him not to be so exacting and make the men so restive. After all the work had to be finished in a reasonable time! He and his brothers had pledged themselves to the government to have the ships completely ready for sea within a month; it was therefore a question of honour for them as business men with a reputation for doing their work effectively and punctually to keep to the time that had been originally fixed. A great deal more trouble had been involved in the whole under-



taking than had been at first anticipated. Was Columbus going to quarrel with Pinzon even before setting sail? Indeed he was himself feverishly anxious for the arrival of the hour when everything would be ready. But when he returned of an evening to La Rábida he was oppressed with a heavy burden of care, and his two friends in the monastery found it hard to lift him by their words of encouragement above all the misgivings that tortured him.

But the day came at last when the flotilla lay in the harbour of Palos ready for the voyage. On the evening of the 2nd August Columbus with his officers and the whole of his ships' company went to confession and Mass at the conventual Church of La Rábida, and the prior Juan Perez gave a solemn and arresting address on the significance of that hour and of the great task that lay before them all, down to the youngest ship's boy, as the pioneers of Christianity and of Christian civilization. But when the crews had to be on board in the morning twilight of the 3rd August 1492—the ships' lanterns gleamed like funeral lights—and it came to saying farewell, the prior himself was unable to comfort the relatives and those who were left behind or to silence the loud crying of the women. Certainly none of all those men would ever return!

But the tide rose and seemed to lay greedy hands on the three ships, gaily decorated with bunting, that rocked on the Palos roadstead. The wind filled the sails, the ropes were unloosed and thrown on deck. The *Niña* was the first to start, and soon all three were sailing down the river to the bar of Saltes, where the boundless ocean took them into its embrace.

## CHAPTER XIV

### COLUMBUS WRITES A DIARY

COLUMBUS kept accurate diaries of all his voyages. So at least he asserts when in February 1502, two months before his fourth and last voyage he wrote to Pope Alexander VI asking him to send mendicant friars, whom he wished to take with him to the New World for the purpose of preaching the Gospel to the Indians. In this letter he regrets that he was unable to go to Rome himself, "in order to lay at the feet of Your Holiness a record in which I have described my undertakings in the manner of Cæsar's Commentaries, and which I have kept from the first day until now." According to this, therefore, he took as his model one of the greatest among statesmen and generals, orators and writers of antiquity, whose memoirs of the wars he had waged (*Commentarii de bello gallico* and *De bello civili*, "on the war in Gaul and on the civil war in Italy") were well known to the age of humanism and no doubt also to Columbus.

By some mysterious fate none of these journals have been transmitted to posterity, although Columbus himself very prudently provided for the future of his family—one might almost say, his dynasty—although his youngest son Fernando devoted himself to scientific pursuits and although the descendants of his son Diego at the present day belong to the Spanish nobility as the dukes of Veragua. Just as the "Columbina," Fernando's famous cosmographical library of 12,000 volumes, inherited by the Dominican monastery of San Pablo and transferred to the cathedral there, where its scanty residue is still to be seen, was partly burned or pillaged in the course of the centuries, so the extensive family archives which existed in the sixteenth century seem to have been sacrificed to a senseless and wicked passion for destruction. The great diary of the first voyage to the New World, a journal kept with special accuracy, we know only from the extracts, fortunately fairly extensive, made from it by Bishop Las Casas, the worthy protector and spokesman of the Indians, for his *History of India* which was first printed in 1877. Those extracts

from the diary were published for the first time in the large collection of documents connected with Columbus edited in 1825 by the Spanish investigator Martin Fernandez de Navarrete. We have no information about the second voyage (1495) from Columbus himself, apart from a sentence which Fernando Colon quotes; evidently he still possessed this diary. The third and fourth voyages (1498 and 1502) Columbus only describes in letters and abridged reports. This makes us regret all the more the loss of the diaries.

Unfortunately Las Casas in his use of the diary of 1492-93, the manuscript of which lay before him, has not kept to the original text. In confusing alternation he has Columbus in one sentence telling his story in his own words, and then in the next sentence he speaks of the admiral in the third person. Cæsar, too, to whom Columbus refers, speaks of himself as though he were describing the doings of another person. But a large and doubtless genuine portion of the text which Las Casas reproduces, employs the first person, and Columbus was not only a man of action, he was also much too dexterous a narrator and too good a writer to degenerate into such a style-less jumble. In any case the adapter found the actual text of the manuscript too discursive for his purpose, which was to give a comprehensive account of the whole history of the New World. He has compressed paragraphs or whole sections into brief statements of fact without altering the meaning, though he occasionally does that as well. This discord cannot be resolved. It would be presumptuous to recast these abridgements in the actual words of Columbus, and if his story was told in the third person, one would get no idea of his power of vivid and fresh description that was unusual in those days. It would no longer be Columbus, and the reader wants, at least now and then, to hear him speak himself.

The most important of the letters written in 1498 and 1505 are not merely records of fact, they are at the same time vindictory statements and acts of indictment aimed at his enemies and calumniators. For that reason they are addressed to the highest quarter, to the King and Queen of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella. To these two the diary of the first voyage is also directed. It begins with a solemn, but at the same time very shrewdly composed, dedication to the monarchs, without whose commanding word Columbus could not have set out on his first voyage to the

West, at least in the year 1492. Although the specimens of his notes offered in the following chapters make no claim to completeness, this dedication might have been omitted, had it been nothing more than a piece of writing in the excessively humble style of that period, though the style in his case shows that if his backbone can yield it is nevertheless firm. But the dedication is so important for the light it throws on Columbus himself, his character and his mode of thought, as well as on the later development of events and his varying relations with the Spanish Court, that it cannot be left out. It is evident from the text itself that it was not written some time after the completion of the whole diary and on the occasion of his sending it to the monarchs to whom it is addressed, but is actually the first page of the manuscript in which Columbus, on the night after his departure from Palos (5th August 1492) began to pen his adventure and with it the first chapter of a new era in the history of the world.

This dedication, which is also an exact and well-considered record of certain agreements and conditions, runs as follows:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..

"To the most high, the most Christian, the most august and most mighty princes, king and queen of Spain and of the islands of the sea, my gracious sovereigns.

"Your majesties have put an end in the present year to the war with the Moors who ruled in Europe, and on the second day of January of this year I saw in the city of Granada the banners of your majesties placed as a sign of conquest on the towers of the Alhambra, the fortress of that city, and beheld the Moorish king come forth from the gates of the city and kiss the hands of your majesties and of the Infanta, my lord. In the same month of January your majesties, as Catholic Christians, pious princes and promoters of the holy Christian faith and as enemies of the sect of Mahomet and of all idolatries and heresies, determined to send me, Christobal Colon, to the lands of India and to the Grand Khan, which is to say in our language king of kings, in order to discover the nature of these lands, peoples and their princes and to make certain of the right means to be taken in order to convert them to our holy faith. Your majesties had learned from me that this Grand Khan, as well as his predecessors, had sent many times to Rome to ask for doctors of our holy faith to instruct him in the same, but that the Holy Father had never

consented to that and that many people had thereby incurred eternal perdition as idolaters and heretics.

"Your majesties ordered me that I should not go by land to the East, as had hitherto been the custom, but should take the route to the West, concerning which course no one amongst us knew for certain that it had been passed before. Your majesties therefore, after you had expelled all the Jews from your kingdoms and territories, commanded me in the same month of January to proceed with a sufficient fleet to the aforesaid lands of India. For this purpose you bestowed great favours upon me, raising me to the nobility, so that henceforward I might style myself 'Don,' and appointing me admiral of the Ocean and viceroy and perpetual governor of all the islands and continents I should discover and conquer, and which in the future may be discovered and conquered in the Ocean; and that my eldest son should be my successor in all these things, and that so it should henceforward abide from generation to generation.

"I departed, therefore, from the city of Granada on Saturday the 12th of May, of the same year 1492, and proceeded to Palos, where there is a harbour. There I equipped three ships well suited for my undertaking. I sailed from that port well furnished with provisions and with many seamen, on Friday the 3rd of August, of the same year, half an hour before sunrise, and took the route for the Canary Islands, which belong to your majesties and are situated in the Ocean, in order to steer my course thence, until I should reach the Indies, and deliver the embassy of your majesties and thereby accomplish all your commands. I intend therefore to record from day to day with the greatest accuracy all that I may do and see and experience, as will hereafter be seen. In addition to this, your august majesties, I shall always set down in the evening how far we have advanced during the day and in the morning how far we have sailed during the night and besides making these notes I shall sketch a new chart in which I shall set down the water and land of the Ocean in their position according to their bearings, and further I shall write a book, in which I shall illustrate everything by picture, according to its latitude from the equinoctial (the equator) and its longitude from the west. Should all this succeed, it will certainly be necessary for me to forget sleep, for it will call for the most unremitting attention to navigation to accomplish these things. It will all be a great labour."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE VOYAGE INTO THE UNKNOWN

WHY did Columbus in the first instance proceed from Palos along the coast of Africa to the Canary Islands, instead of making straight for his unknown goal in the West? He had first of all as a prudent captain to test the efficiency of his three ships and to accustom his haphazard crew to the idea of taking part together in such an unprecedented adventure. Certainly many of them were sea-dogs, hardened by wind and weather, who were afraid of nothing—but only so long as there was land in sight. But there were also poltroons among them who had been allured by the fascination of the unknown and who soon rued the fact that they had taken the earnest money. Besides, according to Toscanelli's chart, which Columbus had with him, the shortest course was from the Canary Islands to the northern point of Cipango; the steersman only required to hold on as straight as an arrow-flight towards the West on the same latitude. The cartographical survey which he intended to make, and for which he had such scanty material at his command, was thereby made much easier, and was perhaps only possible by this means. But if the ships succeeded in arriving at Cipango, then it was only a short distance from there to the mainland of Cathay (China).

The prudence of the admiral—the title was already in common use—was a happy chance. As early as the fourth day (6th August) the rudder of the *Pinta*, which Martin Alonzo Pinzon commanded, was damaged. Was this an accident, or was it done deliberately? One of the sailors was suspected to have caused the damage, in order to curry favour with the ship's owner Quintero, who regretted having taken part in the expedition. Even in Palos they had both attracted notice by their constant grumbling and reluctance to obey orders. The situation was serious, for in the rough sea Columbus could not get near to the *Pinta* without endangering his own ship. On the following day the rudder was hastily repaired and on the 9th August the ships, skirting Lanzarote, arrived at Grand Canary. Both islands—Canary for

as long as ten years—belonged to the king of Castile, who with fire and sword introduced civilization and Christianity among the natives, a peaceful and hardy nomadic people of East Vandal, and consequently of Germanic stock. Teneriffe was only conquered after a three years' war in 1495.

Columbus was anxious to reach Grand Canary, for the *Pinta's* rudder was again out of order and the ship had sprung a leak; as it could not be steered in the wild surge, it had to lie for three days on the high sea, until at last it could put to land in quiet weather. Columbus hoped to find here a ship to replace it, for a lady of high rank, Beatriz de Bobadilla, had just arrived from Spain with the intention of living on the island. In order to meet her he sailed alone to the island of Gomera, also a Spanish possession, and after waiting for her in vain for three days he returned again on the 23rd August. When the admiral's ship sailed past the south coast of Teneriffe on the night from the 24th to the 25th August, the volcano of this island seemed to be ablaze, and a stream of glowing lava flowed from its side. This imposing spectacle was calculated to inspire superstitious spirits with dread—how could even the admiral challenge Heaven by sailing from Palos on a Friday?

Nothing could be done about buying a ship in Grand Canary. So Columbus ordered the *Pinta* to be thoroughly repaired, and on 2nd September all three ships arrived at Gomera, the last halt before the voyage into the unknown. He had left men behind here to forage for fresh meat, wood and drinking-water. The last stores were now taken on board, and on 6th September he gave the order to raise anchor and steer straight West.

There were many Spaniards living on Gomera and on the adjacent islands, and the enterprise of their fellow-countryman did not seem so monstrous to them. Was there land out there in the West? Yes, it could be seen a few times every year on fine days, from the extreme westerly outpost of the islands here, and it was always in the same place! One could swear to that! Certainly no witchcraft was needed to get there—if one had nothing more sensible to do! These assurances were very welcome to Columbus for the sake of his men; they made the moment of saying farewell lighter for them. But his patience, already frayed by the four weeks' delay, was put to a fresh test. He was still within sight of Gomera, and already his sails were drooping as limp as towels. The ships could not get clear of the islands.

Moreover he had heard from the captain of a vessel coming from Ferro that a Portuguese squadron was cruising about in these regions, with the intention of seizing him. The authorities in Lisbon were well informed about his plans, and although they did not adopt his proposals, they looked askance at his having taken them to Spain. His goal also was India, which, since the voyage of Bartolomeu Diaz round the Cape of Good Hope six years before, seemed on the eve of being attained. The Portuguese had no use for any rivals in that quarter. The outfitting of the Spanish expedition, in which even two Portuguese sailors took part, was no secret. Besides, mutual espionage in everything that concerned questions of discovery was in full flower. Perhaps, after all, this voyage ostensibly to the West, was only a feint, and the Spaniards were simply following the course of the Portuguese discoverer down the west coast of Africa, although that had been expressly forbidden by the proclamation of the Spanish government. In that case they would assuredly block their way by main force, for, according to the Bull of Pope Martin V, all these regions "from Cape Bojador as far as the Indies" belonged to the king of Portugal. If Columbus meant to sail westwards, what was he doing at the Canary Islands? That was suspicious enough for them to make short work of him.

The Portuguese, however, did not venture north among the Spanish possessions, and on the 8th September a strong north-west wind arose. Progress at first was slow, for the waves dashed against the starboard side, but on the 9th a strong breeze filled the sails, and when the crew awoke on the morning of the 10th, the last landmark, the Peak of Teneriffe, had disappeared in the East, and an endless wilderness of water stretched before and behind them.

Columbus had been apprehensive of this moment, for now for the first time the crews to some degree would become conscious of what lay before them—reeling on for weeks, perhaps for months, into the unknown, maybe into the infinite, never anywhere but between sky and sea, handed over without hope of rescue to the caprice of every ocean current and to the might of every storm! Was that not sheer insanity and certain sentence of death for them all? When the admiral on the morning of the 10th reprimanded the steersman because he had not held straight west during the night, but had deviated somewhat to the north-west, he could see how the land lay from the sulky looks and



the suppressed defiance that met him on all sides. Some of the dastards were even blubbering and wanting home again, back to the firm, inhabited land, from which they were being borne every hour, farther and farther away. The men assailed the steersman with the peevish questions: "How far have we come? How long will it take us to get back to the nearest islands, if a storm is brewing?" Columbus, to be sure, was prepared for this: from the 9th September onwards he had kept the ship's journal in duplicate. In one of these records he entered the mileage covered, so far as he could reckon it to the best of his ability by measuring the distance of the pole star from the horizon with the aid of the astrolabe, the protractor and the quadrant—a very unreliable instrument in a heavy sea. But he kept this diary secret. Beside the wheel lay another log-book that always showed figures less by a fifth. He had assured the crew that they were to reach the island of Cipango after a distance of 750 leagues, and, as he noticed already, they clung to that figure obstinately. That was his reckoning, guided by Toscanelli's chart and by his own instinctive feeling; but who could say for certain whether it might not be a hundred, or even two hundred, leagues more? The better plan would be to sail right on to the mainland, to Cathay, which surely could not be very much farther away. Accordingly he took these precautions, so as not to be forced by any chance to return when he was almost within reach of his goal. Since the measurements taken on the open sea were very uncertain, he was perfectly successful in keeping up this deception, which, in view of all that was at stake, was quite justified. And although the figures given out on the other two ships were usually rather higher, the admiral's authority adjusted the differences. Next to the trembling needle of the compass nothing occupied his attention so constantly as the equally restless mood of the ship's company, who were not restrained by discipline of any kind. They reacted to every fresh event and vacillated uncertainly between a frenzy of greed for conquest and gold and a despairing dread of death that made them capable of anything. The mast of a large ship that had been sunk drifted past on the 11th September—an ominous sign! On the evening of the 15th a brilliant meteor burst from the sky and fell like a huge flame of fire into the sea—the timorous crossed themselves. Was that a warning from Heaven? On the 16th fog and rain came down. But as soon as the ship was a hundred leagues west of the Azores

the air grew extraordinarily mild and warm; the weather was like that of an April in Andalusia; the mornings especially were delightful; all that was wanting, said the admiral jokingly, was the song of the nightingale. The day before the men on the *Niña* had seen a sea-swallow, which, despite its name, is a bird that haunts rivers. A tropical bird too, had been noticed, which was said never to be found more than twenty-eight leagues from land. And today on the 16th tussocks of grass drifted past for the first time, as fresh and green as if they had been swept away from the land quite recently. There must surely be an island somewhere about here! Columbus agreed, for the idea of a little bit of solid earth already had a wonderfully reassuring effect. "But not the mainland yet, we won't find that until we are much farther west." These grass tussocks were the beginning of the so-called sea of weed, or Mar de Sargossa, that lies between the 16th and 18th degrees of latitude and stretches from 30 degrees west longitude almost to the American continent. The gulf-weed, the berries of which serve as swimming bladders, is carried a great distance by the Gulf Stream, from the Caribbean Sea beyond the Antilles to far across the middle of the ocean. It also propagates itself in the water; hence its fresh green colour which gives the illusory impression of the vicinity of land.

But the crew of the *Santa Maria* also saw the admiral seated in the deck-house brooding gloomily over charts and books and papers. On the 15th he records in his diary: "Today for the whole day and in the evening also the needles pointed to north-west and on the following morning they stood still farther away from north." It was a puzzling phenomenon! The needle of the compass suddenly pointed to the north-west instead of to the north! The magnetic meridian no longer corresponded to the astronomical. If the magnetic needle could not be trusted and the constellations began to waver, what was there to depend upon in this boundless waste of water? He may have recalled the gruesome tales told by old sailors, of magnetic mountains that drew every bit of iron out of ships, so that they fell to pieces. He had no doubt heard of the variation of the magnetic needle, but he had never come across it himself, and for that reason he considered it a mistaken idea. But now it was happening before his own eyes. He tested his observation again and again—but always with the same result. He sought in vain for an explanation of this phenomenon. The worst of it was, however, that he

could not hide this alarming fact from Pinzon and the other experienced sailors. As early as on the 17th he reports in his diary:

"The steersmen took the bearings of the north and ascertained that the needle of the compass varied a whole quarter towards the north-west; they thereby became alarmed in no small degree, but they did not tell the reason. When the admiral noticed that, he ordered them next morning to determine the north once more, and this time the compass pointed correctly. The reason of this, he explained to them, is that the position of the pole star varies and not that of the needle. On the morning of this day there appeared a much denser mass of seaweed than had been seen before; it evidently issued from rivers, for a living crab was found amongst it. The admiral ordered it to be caught and said that it was a sure sign of the nearness of the coast, for these creatures never came farther than eighty leagues from the land. The men asserted that the water had not been so fresh before on the whole voyage from the Canaries, and that the air was always growing milder. All the crews set to work with joyous eagerness, and the ships vied with one another in speed, for each of them wished to be the first to see land. There were shoals of tunnies and the crew of the *Niña* caught one of them. 'All these signs come from the West,' Columbus said to the men, 'there God Almighty, I trust, will let us very soon find land, for all success rests in His hands.' This morning, he added, he saw a white bird, called the tropical bird; it is not in the habit of sleeping on the ocean." Columbus therefore noticed the variation of the compass, but he understood it just as little as the few astronomers who had come across this phenomenon before his time, for at that period nothing was known yet of a separate magnetic north pole. Consequently the steermen's question perplexed him, and to keep them from becoming uneasy he improvised an explanation, which was correct in so far as it applied to the pole star: the position of this star, as a matter of fact, is variable. Apparently the sailors also knew about this, for they were content to accept his explanation. On the 30th September the same incident occurred once more.

Of the three ships the *Pinta*, under the command of captain Martin Pinzon, was the fastest sailer. On the morning of the 18th she got in front of the *Santa Maria*, and Pinzon shouted over to Columbus that he had seen a large flock of birds flying

westwards. Land could not possibly be far away, and meantime he would carry on under full sail. Columbus let him have his will, although the division of the little flotilla was a serious matter. No one knew the fairway and many a ship had been wrecked in the breakers on an unknown coast. But Pinzon was a reliable captain, the weather was fine, and the sea was as calm as the Guadalquivir at Seville. So he went on ahead, while the ship's boys on the *Santa Maria* recited their morning prayer in the presence of the admiral:

“Blessed be thou, O light,  
To Holy Cross be praise!  
To Thee, O Triune God  
Our thankful hearts we raise.  
Blest be the morning bright  
That comes at God's behest;  
And on the day He gives to us  
May His own blessing rest!”

Pinzon was a reckless dare-devil, and this moving in file was very little to his liking. He was unused to being in a subordinate position, he had a will of his own, and he was just as feverishly eager to make discoveries as Columbus himself. Besides the queen had offered a prize to the man who first discovered land, a yearly pension of £10, and he was unwilling to let it slip either from himself or from his crew. But in the evening he was back again in his place—he had sighted nothing but measureless sea and green floating meadows, and the calm weather during the days that followed forced them all to have patience.

The evidences of the nearness of land, however, became more numerous. Pelicans flew about the ships every day, a sea-swallow allowed itself to be caught by hand, little flocks of land-birds even settled on the yards and mast-heads, twittered cheerfully overhead and flew away again in the evening. On the 21st September a whale was seen—a fish that likes to keep near the shore, and occasionally, just as on land, slight showers of rain fell without the least breath of wind stirring. But time and again the dark shadows on the horizon proved to be nothing more than banks of mist and clouds, while wide stretches of seawrack were as dense as a swamp. Would the ships manage at all to make their way through these? The men whispered to

one another and looked gloomily at this glassy green, ice-smooth surface, which no current and no wind seemed to shift. Columbus had thrown the lead on the 19th, but had found no bottom even at 300 metres. Would this bottomless marsh hold the ships fast? Would this luxuriant weed cling round the ships and climbing with its thousand fingers up their sides and over their breast-rails, either transform them into prisons where every soul would die of hunger, or drag them down into the depths with it? Was there in this region so far from the known world any wind at all to carry them back to Spain? "*Santa Maria!* What does the admiral say to this? He will have to listen to us! Send for the admiral!"

Columbus sharply reprimanded them for their lack of faith and promised that they would have wind, and on the evening of the 21st a brisk head wind from the north-west actually did rise, which slowed down the speed of the ships and scattered the sea-meadow! That was help in time of need; the croakers were silenced, and when the bean soup steamed in the pots at evening—for there was no meat on Friday—and the cabin boy went his rounds, squirting from the goat's skin bag each man's due share of wine, the wine of Spain, the men laughed at their fears. "The wind was urgently needed," the admiral admits in his diary of the next morning, "for there was a serious commotion among the men of my ship." But during the night when the men lay and sweated in their confined, closely-packed bunks on damp, evil-smelling rush mats and sheep-skins, with only a single light at the wheel burning dimly—for all other lights were forbidden for fear of fire—when black silence surrounded them as though they were already lying at the bottom of the sea, and the waves gnawed at the ship's planks like hungry rats, they infected one another with their alarm; they kissed the consecrated medals and reliquaries that many of them carried on their bare breasts, and between their prayers to all their saints and succourers they hurled loud and shameless insults and wild imprecations at the admiral who had brought them into this desperate situation and was determined to lead them to certain death.

On Sunday morning Pedro de Arenas, the ship's clergyman and confessor to the admiral and the crew had solemnly celebrated Mass and with well-chosen words had strengthened their faith in God. For dinner that day there was baked cod, their favourite dish, and the men who were not on duty amused themselves with

bathing and swimming round the ship, for the sea was suddenly cleared of weed and was as placid as an inland lake. But when one of them shook his head in doubt as he thought of this, the merry shouting and yelling became gradually silenced. One after the other they clambered, dripping with water, up the rope-ladder and then sat or stood about the deck silent and sullen in their brown capuchin cloaks, with their red Toledo caps stuck insolently above their ears. If the sea remained like that, heavy, sluggish and as smooth as molten lead—who could ever move them from the bit? The sails stood as stiff as boards. The priest and, at last, Columbus himself, tried to reassure the men and as in the Bible story the miracle of the day before was repeated: the sea became rough although there was not a breath of wind, the waves swept up with white fringes of foam, washed over the deck and leaped up to the “castle” at the stern; and those who were still in the water took care to get on board as fast as they could, so as not to be smashed against the ship’s side or carried away by the huge waves. Fearful and amazed the men scarcely dared to look up at the admiral as he stood at the wheel, clad from head to foot in his sailor’s cloak with its rain-cowl, his countenance flushing youthfully beneath his white hair. Raising his hand he spoke to them and pointed in warning to this sign from Heaven—like one of those God-intoxicated monks, who used to travel through Spain and transform the veriest cowards into heroic crusaders! He must surely, they thought, be in league with supernatural powers!

Nor did Columbus himself think otherwise. In his diary of the 23rd September he wrote, as though he had expected it all: “Such a miracle has not been seen since the time of the Jews, when Moses led them out of captivity; for him as for me the waves were absolutely necessary.” And when darkness fell and the men crept once more into their berths, they joined, penitent and reassured, in the verse which the ship’s boys sang every evening as they lit the lanterns for the night:

“The guard is watching at his post,  
Down from the hour-glass flows the sand;  
Our happy voyage to the end  
We leave, contented, in God’s hand.”

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LIGHT OF THE NEW WORLD

ON the forenoon of the 25th September a boat manned by four red-capped sailors pushed off from the *Santa Maria* and in a few minutes lay at the stern of the *Pinta*. Columbus climbed the ladder and was greeted by the captain and the ship's company in a manner befitting his rank.

Three days previously he had sent Pinzon, very probably at the wish of the latter, a chart which he had drawn on the basis of Toscanelli's sketch and had completed in accordance with what he had learned himself. Thus in this chart he had recorded, or perhaps merely suggested, the position of several islands which the numerous signs of land led him to conclude were near at hand. He conjectured that they lay in the north as well as in the south and doubtless he believed that he had already sailed through the group of islands which were designated on Toscanelli's chart as the legendary "Antilia." But now he could get no rest until he had made certain of this. His goal was India, the distant mainland in the west, or Cipango the island that lay in front of it. He was bound to reach both of these if he held straight on keeping to the same latitude in which he had been sailing until then. He was utterly averse to being kept back by tacking about; that simply meant useless loss of time. "We have time enough," so he wrote in his diary, "to make a search for these islands on the return voyage." But the captain of the *Pinta* had been bewitched by these islands; perhaps, too, he needed a fixed point in this waste of sky and water to keep his men quiet, or he was simply anxious to find "the first land in the West," and thus win the prize the queen had offered, although such an island had no connection with the real object of the voyage. It was for the purpose of keeping him to the proper course that Columbus visited him on the 25th.

Pinzon was right in maintaining that they must now be in the vicinity of these islands. Columbus was in a difficult position; he could not say to his associate: "We sailed past them already

on the 19th—today they lie far behind us.” That would have given away his ruse with the secret ship’s journal; the number of leagues that Pinzon reckoned daily was always greater by a certain amount than those of the flagship. He therefore let him keep to his belief, but he endeavoured to divert his attention from the islands. Ocean currents, he answered him, had driven the ships back in a north-easterly direction; on the whole they were by no means so far on their way as the steersmen assumed. Evidently he wished to harmonize his own doctored figures for the distances covered with the larger figures registered every day on the two accompanying ships, and Pinzon was to agree with him that these islands were not to be seen at all, because the ships had been driven too far to the north. Pinzon, to be sure, did not seem to understand this, but he acquiesced in it, and Columbus returned to his ship.

Afterwards he had fresh cause for reflection; the chart in Pinzon’s hands was a constant challenge to him to set out on voyages of discovery on his own account, for he had certainly not given up the idea of finding the islands for which he was searching in this region. So Columbus sailed as near as he could to the *Pinta* and requested the captain to hand him back the chart again; he wanted to note on it the distance they had sailed that day. With the help of a wooden box and a cord it was soon brought on board, and Columbus along with his pilot and several of the ship’s company proceeded to take the bearings. He thought it necessary that day, evidently in consideration of the mood of his crew and of the compact he had made with them, to make the reckoning more or less in public, before a kind of soldiers’ council, and in doing so it was, of course, supremely important that the alert witnesses should be gulled.

But before any result was reached a tremendous clamour was heard on the *Pinta*, the nearest ship. Every one rushed out. There was Pinzon standing on the high quarter-deck of his ship, telegraphing with his hands and bawling quite frenzied with delight: He had seen land, and the promised reward fell to him! Since he said again and again that there could be no doubt about this, Columbus knelt down to give thanks to God first of all. Pinzon and his men sang a solemn “Gloria in excelsis Deo,” and the crew of the flagship joined in the chorale, while the men of the *Niña* climbed the masts and the rigging and said confidently to one another: That is undoubtedly land there in



the south-west. Columbus, too, seemed to be convinced and gave orders to steer in that direction; for it could scarcely be farther off than 25 leagues. Until it was absolutely dark every one asserted positively that there was a coast in that quarter. In the universal excitement the reckoning of the ship's position was forgotten. Columbus took advantage of this and recorded for that day only 13 leagues instead of the correct 21.

The delusion which they all shared lasted until the afternoon of the 26th; then came the bitter disappointment, and one after another they had all to admit dejectedly that the supposed land was nothing but a bank of cloud. Columbus therefore reverted again to his westward course. But during the days that followed the precursors of land showed no signs of diminishing; dolphins played about the ship, and a few of them were caught. Three or four birds, all of the same species, twittered in the shrouds; their nests could not be far away; a single bird might perhaps stray a long distance, but not several of them together. Pelicans and tropical birds described wide circles on the sky. Even a frigate-bird was observed, which pursued the pelicans until they let the fish drop that they already had in their gullets. This bird lives like a sea-rover on the prey he seizes from others. It is far superior to other birds in power of wing, and does not need to fly any great distance from land in order to find its food.

The 3rd October seemed about to develop into a critical day. In the early morning of the previous day the attention of Columbus had been drawn by his pilot Sancho Ruiz to the fact that they were now 578 leagues from Ferro, the extreme outpost of the Canary Islands, and the man's troubled look seemed to ask the question: Where is India? Columbus, reckoning from Gomera, which lay a little farther east, accordingly entered 584 leagues in the ship's journal. The *Pinta*, however, reported 634 leagues on the same day, and the *Niña* as much as 650! Only a few more days now and the compact between the commander-in-chief and his crew would be at an end. His private log-book already showed on the 1st October 707 leagues, and as the wonderfully quiet sea had allowed them to make 85 leagues in the two following days, the agreed figure of 750 leagues had then been far exceeded. The men grew restless again. Since the day before the green seaweed in the water had drifted in the same direction as the ships. They invariably preferred an adverse wind or a contrary

current, for they looked on these as a guarantee that a west wind would not be completely lacking on their return voyage to their native land. On that day it occurred to them that, with the exception of a pair of sandpipers, no other birds were any longer to be seen. What could be the meaning of that? Columbus explained to them that these birds certainly had their home on islands which he had marked on his chart, but which he had now left far behind him; they had simply not wanted to follow the ships any farther. Why then had he not made for these islands first? some of the men shouted menacingly. It was the question that Pinzon also had raised, and Columbus, finding it inconvenient, answered testily: It would have been folly to go cruising about there; he had no time to waste on these aimless deviations, the object of the voyage was India, and that was the main thing. That day Columbus was seen no more among the crew.

On the following day pelicans appeared again, and a cabin-boy hit one of them with a stone. A frigate-bird, too, was noticed again, and several of the men said that they had seen a white bird that was certainly a sea-gull. On the 5th October there were more birds, and the sea was free of weeds. A large number of flying fish fell on deck, and the crew amused themselves by catching them. But the unrest and tension increased, for there was a following wind and during these days the rate of advance was greater than ever. The 750 leagues must surely have been covered at last, and it seemed to the men to be quite contrary to every stipulation that the captain should simply have sailed past islands, which, according to his own admission, could not in the last weeks have been very far away.

And once in these days the moment came which a poem of Luise Brachmann's, made popular by German school-books, has treated very effectively (*Was willst du, Fernando, so trüb und bleich?*): the crew mutinied and wanted to force the captain to turn back. The development in this case was not so dramatic as in the ballad of the romantic poetess, for Columbus did not even consider it necessary to record in his diary of October such a violent outbreak of general discontent. But on the 14th February, when a storm seemed about to crush all his hopes of a successful homeward voyage and Columbus was in a manner making his will, he recalls that incident: the whole crew had with one mind resolved to return and to rebel against his orders. This is confirmed also by the statements of several witnesses—

made, it is true, with the intention of disparaging the admiral's services in favour of Martin Pinzon—in the action brought by Diego Colon, after his father's death, against the Spanish treasury regarding his chartered rights.

On the 6th October Pinzon spoke to Columbus again. The islands in the middle of the ocean had evidently been passed. Well and good! But now the large island of Cipango which he had seen on the chart must surely be near. In no case must they sail past it, and since the ships, according to the assertion of the commander-in-chief, had been driven to some extent northwards, they would now have to keep a south-west course. But Columbus would hear nothing of this. If they turned aside from the direct course, he retorted, they would no longer have any idea at all as to when they would reach land; if Cipango also was left lying to the south of them, all the better, they would then arrive at the mainland first; the islands would still be there on the return voyage. The course was on no account to be altered.

Had Columbus kept to his determination and altered his course only the least degree to the north-west, instead of to the south-west, his ships would have run straight across to the American continent at the peninsula of Florida. But unfortunately the events of the succeeding days induced him to yield at last to Pinzon's obstinate and blustering pressure.

The ships had orders to line up on one front in the evenings and to keep close to one another during the night. Thus in the morning they always began to race one another, for each new sun might shine on the longed-for land, and the vessel that was farthest in front had the best chance of winning the queen's prize. On the 7th October the *Niña* kept the lead from early morning onwards; then suddenly she fired a shot from one of her guns and hoisted a flag at the mainmast—the prescribed signal for: Land in sight! Feverish excitement took possession of the crews on all the ships. Land! Land at last! So the *Niña* had had the luck to descry it, she deserved the prize! But no matter how eagerly they strained their eyes and scanned the horizon at every leisure moment—not a trace of land was to be seen, and when the *Niña* was again in her place, even her captain, Vicente Pinzon, had to admit that his men had been fooled by a mirage or once again by a bank of cloud. In the clear visibility of the evening the line where sky and sea met was so plainly defined that there was not even the smallest dark fleck to indicate

the existence of anything like land. The men blamed their comrades bitterly for having given them this second disappointment.

Meanwhile Columbus observed the flight of the birds, of which there was an unusually large number that day, stretching in whole flocks towards the south-west. They were bound to have their nesting-places on a coast somewhere near, or they were flying to warmer climates from the winter that had already begun in northern latitudes. Had not the Portuguese discovered most of the islands that belonged to them by the flight of birds? Martin Pinzon, too, pointed constantly to the sky and said that he had even seen parrots flying over the ships. He repeated obstinately that as the result of watching the birds he had long wanted to sail towards the south-west. Besides by that time they had already sailed 200 leagues farther than had been agreed upon with the crew. Columbus, certainly, was convinced that even on the course they had held until then they would reach land in the next few days, and in the heat of the discussion he staked his life on this. But he could not dispute Pinzon's belief so emphatically as he had done the day before, for this day's flight of birds had made him thoughtful himself. Might not these flocks of birds be messengers of God sent to guide him in the right way—a third miracle in addition to the two that had already occurred, the sudden west wind and the upheaval of the sea in the calmest weather? Finally, then, they would follow the track of the birds for two days. He could not afford, in these last decisive days, to quarrel with Pinzon, to whom he was indebted in so many ways and whom the majority of the crew obeyed as readily as they did himself.

It was soon evident that he had acted wisely. The ships sailed south-west before a brisk wind, the weather was finer and the seaweed fresher than ever, land-birds flitted about the masts, geese, crows and ravens were seen, and the whir of the birds' wings could even be heard the whole night through. But the crew began to lose patience and to complain that the voyage was longer than the agreement allowed, declaring in their excitement that this gamble with their lives could go on no longer. Columbus tried to quieten the men and made them extravagant promises. When this had no effect he told them curtly that this incessant grumbling did not help them in the least; when all was said and done he was on the way to India and he would not make a halt until with God's aid he had reached it. The men found even

less encouragement from the other two captains, who were now determined to carry on to the end. Martin Pinzon laughed at them and is said to have shouted to the admiral in a loud voice: "Have half a dozen of them strung up or thrown overboard, your grace, and if you won't risk it, we shall do it, my brother and I!" At that even the command-in-chief's face that had been flushed with wrath wrinkled in a smile, and he answered: "With fellows like you we shall certainly make good!"

And they really did make good, for the day was already breaking that was to release them from their nightmare and turn all their dread into exultant certainty. On that morning, the 11th October, the sea rose in waves higher than they had ever seen before during the whole voyage. The signs of land grew more numerous from hour to hour. A fresh, green twig floated past. Those on board the *Pinta* saw reeds and a board and they picked up another piece of wood which seemed to have been finely carved with an iron tool. But the men on the *Niña* made the most astonishing find of all—a branch of a tree with wild roses. Land was bound to be seen at last; at any minute it might spring up above the line of waves that encircled the horizon. All their faint-heartedness was swept away; no one now had had any doubts about the success of their foolhardy voyage—a man would look at his neighbour, both nodding to one another and saying almost at the same time: "Ah, yes, the admiral!" and then they would make a playful gesture with their right hand by way of threat, as though there were something very mysterious about him. Although hour after hour passed without any coast coming in sight, none of them was discouraged; they felt its nearness with all their senses.

Towards evening Columbus ordered the sails to be reefed to a few yards to prevent the ships from running aground overnight. After the evening devotions, at which the sailors usually recited the *Salve regina*, some of them praying, the others chanting, he assembled the crew of his ship and rigorously enjoined the night-watch on the "castle" at the bow and those who relieved them, to keep a specially sharp look-out and to report anything remarkable they might happen to observe, so that the ships should not run any risk in these unknown waters. But he would give, in addition to the yearly pension of £10, which the queen had promised, a silk doublet to the man who could say that he was the first to descry land.

When the night fell he himself stood on the "castle" abaft at the wheel-house. The sea was calm again, the waves seemed as though they were out of breath. A veil of mist covered the sky; not a star was to be seen, nor the moon, which was in its last quarter. Murmurs and stealthy laughter came up to him from the middle deck, and, now and again, he heard someone humming a light-hearted martial air. Only a few of the sailors had gone to rest; the most of them leaned against the breast-rail and the rigging, peering out into the darkness, like the night-watch and the admiral, whom they had just seen, about ten o'clock, going up to the "castle" at a rapid pace. The tormenting excitement and tension of the past days had completely left him as well. He was as care-free and sure of himself, as though he were an eagle winging its way with vigorous beat of pinion through this dark chaos, and feeling the effortless power of its stroke. His thoughts turned to God, whose protecting hand he believed he plainly felt above his head; he tried to recollect a prayer of thanksgiving, but his lips could do nothing but form the exultant words: "Land! Land!"

Suddenly Columbus started. There, far off against the sky—was that not a light glimmering? It sent out a reddish gleam, disappeared and came back again, like a torch waved to and fro, or like a flame that blazed up and then sank again. Almighty God! Light! Light!—Or did his eyes deceive him? Was his excited imagination playing him a trick? Where there was light, there must also be land! He called one of the noblemen, who had remained near him during that night, Pedro Gutierrez, the king's chamberlain, to come to him. He, too, saw the light. "Where there is light, there must also be land," Columbus repeated again and again. Still another witness was sent for, the chief inspector and treasurer of the ship, Rodrigo Sanchez; but he could not make out anything, because he did not stand so near to the ship's breast-rail as Columbus and Gutierrez. These two saw the light a few times more; it flickered like a candle and then was extinguished completely.

Hour after hour passed. The sand-glass under the steersman's lantern showed that it was two o'clock in the morning. The hulls of the ships with their masts and sails already stood out against the western sky as dim, black silhouettes, and in the east the line of the horizon was clearly defined—then a flash and a shot—the signal: "Land in sight." The shot had come, not

from the admiral's ship, but from the *Pinta*, which—by accident or by design—held the foremost place. A sailor, Rodrigo de Triana, in the first grey of the morning had descried a faint streak on the western horizon. And when the crew in each of the three ships at the sound of the signal clambered up the rigging or pushed their way up to the "castle" on the poop—the dim streak stood out more and more clearly—this time there could be no delusion! It was a coast! And suddenly from the silence all around the clear voice of the ship's chaplain rose up to Heaven like a sheet of flame: *Te Deum laudamus*—Almighty God we praise Thee! One after another the voices joined in the solemn chorale, until at last it rang out across the greyish-black billows with the roar of a tempest. Then the universal tension gave place to exuberant merriment, and the crews vied with one another in bellowing out on the morning air the largest number of sailor and soldier ditties with the loudest voices. On the *Pinta* especially the fun was fast and furious; a tambourine and some bagpipes supplied the music and the sailors danced boisterously to it round the mainmast. Rodrigo de Triana reeled from one arm to the other like a much-admired village belle. The captain Martin Pinzon had given his men a skin of wine for their jollification and each time he looked across at the *Santa Maria* he smiled with amusement and even contempt. His *Pinta* had outstripped her in the race for the queen's prize! Not till later did he learn to his great mortification of the light that had been seen from the flagship four hours earlier. But when the admiral appeared on the deck of his ship, he was greeted with rousing cheers and waving of caps; his men fought with one another to be the first to kiss his hand, and many of them, frenzied with success, sank to their knees to give thanks both to the man chosen of Heaven and to God.

The ships drifted slowly on until dawn. Then the sails were hoisted again, and in the resplendent morning light of the 12th October 1492, once more a Friday, the ships lay forthwith before a flat coast, bright with the finery of its fresh, green woods, a sight they had not set eyes on for five long weeks. And on the yellow beach not only were there birds fluttering up and down, but brown, human-like figures were also gathered there and were running about completely naked, lifting their hands to heaven and uttering shrill, unintelligible cries. They flung themselves to the ground in fear, and leaping up again plunged into the sea

as though they were intending to run out to the ships, and then flying once more to the beach they hid themselves in the nearest brushwood.

And now the ships dropped anchor, the chains rattled and creaked, and boats were sent off manned by armed crews. Some of the men had been transformed into soldiers; they had exchanged the seaman's dark, woollen cloak for the buff coat and the red cap for the narrow-brimmed hat. They carried muskets and blunderbusses, one or two of them crossbows as well, and their halberds rattled when they jostled one another. Even Columbus was in the garb of a military commander-in-chief; he wore a dark velvet suit with a narrow neck-ruff, violet silk stockings and the short cloak without which no Spanish cavalier appeared at the Court; a golden reliquary gleamed on his hat-band; his left hand gripped his dagger, and in his right hand he carried the royal standard. The two other captains each carried a banner with a green cross, on the right and left of which there were the letters F and I surmounted by crowns.

Columbus was the first to set foot on the newly discovered land; he threw himself down, kissed the earth and gave thanks to God. The captains also with the soldiers and sailors fell on their knees and remained for a while in silent prayer, disturbed only by the occasional rattle of weapons. Then they formed ranks and went in solemn procession to a low hill near the beach. Here Columbus drew his dagger, unfurled the royal banner and proclaimed with a loud voice that he took possession in the name of the king and queen for all time coming of this unknown land that had been discovered by Spanish ships. His words were drowned by a flourish of the trumpets and by shouts of acclamation. As witnesses of this transaction he called the royal notary and general secretary of the fleet, Rodrigo de Escovedo, the chief inspector, Rodrigo Sanchez, and the two captains Martin and Vicente Pinzon; their names were entered in the official record of the act of taking possession. At the same time Columbus, in accordance with his agreement with the crown of Spain, administered the oath of loyalty, for from then onwards he was Lord High Admiral of the Atlantic Ocean, viceroy and life-long governor of all the islands here in the West, found and annexed either by himself or by others as the result of his voyage of discovery. From that day onwards he also legally bore the title of "Don," an honour which was bestowed only on men



who had deserved well of the State, and which gave him the same status as the Spanish nobility. The ceremony concluded with the singing of the *Salve regina*, in which the men who had had to remain on board the ships joined vigorously.

At the approach of the boats the aborigines had fled to the adjoining wood and now stood hidden behind trees and bushes, gazing with terrified eyes at the strangely flashing performance of these huge, gaily-coloured bipeds, who had crept from the bowels of ships that were high and swift beyond all belief. They must surely have flown straight down from heaven!

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS

THE land on which the Spaniards, under the leadership of Admiral Don Colon first set foot on the 12th October 1492 soon proved to be an island called in the native tongue Guanahani. Columbus gave it the name of San Salvador (the Saviour). With its luxuriant fertility it seemed like a little paradise; delightfully traversed by rivers and streams it was rich in plants and trees of unknown species, and there was no sign anywhere of savage or even of carnivorous animals. Its inhabitants, too, seemed to live in a primeval, paradisaal state, a fact which must at once have reminded a man as familiar with the Bible as Columbus was of the first human beings in the creation story. The next pages of his diary are devoted to a description of these aborigines and furnish an extraordinarily valuable historical document, for they give a detailed account of tribes who succumbed, as though they had been stricken with an infectious disease, to the civilization that came to them from the East, and who a single generation after their discovery had already completely died out. Moreover, as these portions of his notes seem to have been preserved in their original wording, Columbus had best tell the adventures of the following days in his own words.

*12th October 1492.*

"I saw forthwith that these people here would be more easily converted to our holy faith by kindly treatment than by compulsion. In order to win their confidence from the first I presented some of them with red caps, strings of glass beads, which they hang at once round their necks, and other things of no value, that gave them excessive delight and won their friendship for us. When we were back in our boats again, they came swimming out to us and brought us parrots, balls of cotton yarn, spears and all sorts of things, in return for which we gave them glass beads and small bells. In truth they willingly presented us with everything they possessed, but they seemed to me to be very poor. They go

about as completely naked as when they were born, the women as well; though, certainly, I saw only a very young girl. It was mostly quite young men who were to be seen; I did not notice any who would be older than thirty. They were well built, had fine figures and agreeable looks. Their hair is coarse and is docked like a horse's tail; it falls over their foreheads as far as their eyebrows; only at the back of their necks do they wear some long locks that are never cut. The colour of their skin is the same as in the Canaries, neither black nor white; some of them paint themselves black, others white or red or some other colour. They colour their faces, or only their eyes or their noses, but many even their whole bodies. They do not carry weapons, they have none at all; when I showed them my dagger, they took it unsuspectingly by the blade and cut themselves with it. They do not know iron. Their spears are made from reeds and have a fish-bone at the end or some other kind of point. They are all of tall stature and of handsome, well-proportioned build. Some of them have scars on their bodies. That struck me, and I asked them by the language of signs how they came by them; they indicated that people came from the adjoining islands to make them captive; they had to defend themselves against them. It occurred to me at once, and I am still of the same opinion, that people came across from the mainland to carry them off as slaves. They will make excellent domestic servants and they must be quick of apprehension, for they soon understood all that was said to them. It will not be difficult to convert them to Christianity, for they do not seem yet to have any other religion. When I leave I shall, if God will, bring six of them with me to your majesties, in order that they may learn Spanish. Except parrots I have not seen any animal here."

*Saturday, 13th October 1492.*

"The day had scarcely broken when a crowd of youthful, splendid, really handsome fellows had already assembled on the beach. The heads and foreheads are broader than I have hitherto seen in any race of men. They have large, very beautiful eyes and both their legs are straight; they are slim in build and not fat. They came in rowing boats, which are excellently formed of a tree, and indeed of a single piece; some are so large that they can hold forty or fifty men, others so small that they can only accommodate one man. A shovel such as bakers use serves them for an

oar, and with this they move with astonishing swiftness. When a canoe of this sort upsets they right it again as they swim and bale out the water with calabashes which they carry with them. They brought balls of spun cotton, parrots and other trifles and they were satisfied with whatever we gave for them. It was a matter of great importance to me to elicit whether they possessed gold, for some of them wore a small gold pin bored through their nostrils. From signs they made to me I gathered that somewhere south of their island there lived a king who had whole casks of gold. I asked if they were willing to go there with me, but I soon saw that they had no desire to do that. They have a great longing for our articles, and if they have nothing to give in return, they take whatever they can lay hands on, leap overboard with it at once and swim away. But they give anything they have for a mere trifle, even for fragments of glass or earthenware. One of them gave 16 balls of cotton-yarn weighing over twenty pounds for three halfpence. I shall forbid this bartering and only take as much cotton as will enable me to bring a fairly large amount with me to your majesties. The cotton grows here on the island, but I am not able at present to make any further search for it. The gold which the natives wear in their noses is also found here. But at present I shall not lose any time over it, but will see to it that we shall reach Cipango as soon as possible. Now, at night-fall they are returning again to the shore in their boats."

*Sunday, 14th October 1492.*

"In the morning I ordered our boats to be got ready and sailed along the island in a north-easterly direction in order to learn more about its coast and its settlements. Two or three villages soon came into view; their inhabitants came running to the beach, shouted to us to come inshore and burst into loud acclamations. When they saw that I did not intend to land, they leaped into the sea and swam out to us. So far as I could understand they asked us if we came from heaven. An old man clambered into my boat, and the others, men and women, cried: 'Come then and see the people who have fallen down from the sky, bring them food and drink.' Then a large number of men and also some women came to the beach with water and victuals, and lifting their hands to heaven, as though they wished to thank God, they invited us to draw near. I did not venture to land, however, for

an immense cliff extends in front of the coast. It forms a harbour in which all the ships in Christendom could find room, but the entrance to it is very narrow. There may also be many shoals in the harbour, but the water there is as calm as in a well. I made this voyage mainly for the purpose of discovering for your majesties if there is anywhere a place where a fort might be built. I also found a promontory that looked almost like an island and that might be made into a fort in two days. Still that will not be at all necessary, for these people do not understand the use of arms, as your majesties will see from the seven men whom I have ordered to be detained, so that I may bring them with me to learn our tongue and then to return to their home again. The whole of the natives could either be taken to Castile, or made captive on their own island, according as your majesties might command; fifty men would be enough to subdue them and to keep them in obedience. Near the promontory, moreover, there are clumps of magnificent trees unknown to me, with as fine a show of green foliage as can be seen in springtime in Castile; there is also an abundance of drinking-water.

"After I had made this survey of the coast and harbour, we returned to our ships and proceeded under sail. Island after island now came into view, in so great number that I positively did not know where to land, and the natives whom I had brought with me gave me to understand by signs that these islands were innumerable; they gave the names of more than a hundred of them. At last I sailed to the one that seemed to me to be the largest; it is about five leagues from San Salvador, of the others some lie nearer to it, some farther away. All these islands are quite flat, without any hills and they are exceedingly fertile. They are all of them inhabited and their inhabitants are at feud among themselves, but for all that they are really a quite inoffensive and really attractive people."

*Monday, 15th October 1492.*

"As I was unacquainted with the fairway, I lay to overnight and did not sail further until dawn. The distance, however, was rather great, and the current was against me, so I did not reach the island until about midday. Its east coast which faces San Salvador extends for five leagues from north to south; the other runs from east to west for more than ten leagues, and as I saw a still larger island lying farther west, I sailed along its coast and

kept under sail until night, otherwise I should not have been able to reach its western point today. I called this island Santa Maria de la Concepcion. I cast anchor after sunset, in order to find out if there was any gold here, for the natives of San Salvador, whom I had with me, told me that the people here wear heavy gold rings on their arms and legs. That was certainly only a stratagem on their part, for they hoped to be able to make their escape here. I did not wish, however, to sail past an island without having taken possession of it, although the annexation of a single island ought to hold good for them all. On that account I remained there overnight.

“Early on the following morning the boats, with armed crews, went to land. A number of the natives made their appearance; they were just as naked as those of San Salvador and of the same race. They allowed us to walk about their island as much as we liked and gave us anything we wished.

“As a strong south-west wind suddenly arose I was unwilling to wait any longer and I returned to the ship. A large canoe lay alongside the *Niña* and one of the natives from San Salvador who was on board, leaped into the sea, clambered into the canoe and rowed so quickly away that none of our boats would have been able to overtake him, for we were a good distance off. He reached the shore and left the canoe lying there. Some of my men went back to the shore at once in order to pursue him. Then all the aborigines fled in every direction like frightened chickens. The canoe that had been left on the beach was brought back again to the *Niña*. Another, but smaller, canoe approached the ship from the other side; it had only one man on board, who offered us cotton-yarn for barter. He was unwilling to come on board, so some of the sailors leaped into the water and seized him. I was able to observe all this closely from the after-deck of my ship. I had the man brought to me at once; I put a red cap on his head and some strings of glass beads round his arm, hung two bells on his ears, ordered his canoe, which by this time was on board the *Niña*, to be given back to him and sent him home again. He wanted to present me with his yarn, but I did not take it. As we were sailing away I could still see the natives crowding round him on the beach; they seemed to be quite beside themselves with amazement and quite reassured as to our good intentions; indeed they seemed rather to think that the fugitive had been guilty of some misdeed and for that reason had been put under restraint.

This was just the impression I wished to produce, when I gave the man presents and allowed him to go; I wanted the people to learn how to value us and to receive us again in a friendly manner, in the event of your majesties sending another expedition hither at any time. Moreover, what I gave him was only worth a few pence. Also on my order the canoe that was being towed by the *Niña* was allowed to float away.

"In the morning we raised anchor and set sail about ten o'clock with a south-east wind in a southerly direction towards the large island in the west, which, according to the statements of the natives who accompanied me from San Salvador, was also said to be rich in gold. In that island the aborigines wear bracelets of gold on their arms and legs and necks, as well as gold pins in their noses and ears. This new island, which I christened Fernandina, lies about nine leagues distant, and its west coast extends for about twenty-eight leagues from north-west to south-east. It is just as flat and lacking in hills as the other two. No cliffs are to be seen anywhere on these coasts; only there are reefs lying everywhere in front of them. So one has to be on the alert when casting anchor, and above all to be careful not to sail too close to the land, although the water is so clear that one can see to the bottom. But at two gun-shots from the shore the water is everywhere so deep here that our lead did not touch bottom. Here every little patch of ground is green and fertile, the air is delightful, and there may be a great deal here that remains unknown to me. But for the present I will not spend any more time in discovering and visiting these many islands; since I learned from my islanders that bracelets of gold are worn on the neck and arms—and it is gold, for I showed them several articles made of gold that I had with me—I shall have to search for the land that is the source of this metal, and with God's help I shall soon succeed in finding it.

"In the middle of the inlet between these two islands I came across a man in a canoe, who was also going from Santa Maria to Fernandina. He had with him a piece as large as a fist of the kind of bread they bake here, a calabash of water, some brown earth pulverised and kneaded into a lump and a few dried leaves, which must be considered uncommonly valuable here, for I was presented with some of them already in San Salvador. He had also a small basket woven by himself, containing a string of beads and two of our coins. He had therefore come from San Salvador,

had crossed over to Santa Maria and was now on his way to Fernandina. When he rowed up to my ship and wanted to come on board, I ordered that both he and his canoe should be hoisted up and all his articles lifted out carefully. He had bread, honey and something to drink set before him, and I took him with me to Fernandina. There I gave him all his possessions back, so that thereby he might form a good opinion of us, and that any other expedition which your majesties should perhaps send again might be well received and supplied with all that the people here have to give."



CHAPTER XVIII  
THE FORTUNATE ISLES

*Tuesday, 16th October 1492*

“WE had left Santa Maria behind us about midday. But as a calm prevailed during the whole afternoon, we did not arrive soon enough at Fernandina to find a secure anchorage; one cannot be too cautious here, if the anchor is not to be lost. I lay to accordingly at some distance from the coast and it was not until the morning that I landed near one of the settlements. Forthwith there came to meet us the man whom we had met yesterday on the voyage. He had given such a good account of us that even during the night our ships were surrounded by canoes, which brought us drinking-water and all kinds of things. I ordered each of them to be given some trifle, a small string of ten or twelve beads, brass tambourines which cost a maravedi in Castile and some leather straps; they were all great rarities to them. Whoever came on board had some molasses set before him. When I sent the boats to the shore about three o'clock to fetch water, the natives led my men with the greatest eagerness to the places where they could find water, brought back the barrels when they had been filled and were delighted to be able to do us any favour.

“This island is very large, it extends a long distance towards the west, and I resolved to sail round it, for, so far as I could understand, a gold mine exists here or in the near neighbourhood, in a city or island that is called Samoet; all the natives who came on board, as well as the people from San Salvador, gave it this name; I heard of it also on Santa Maria.

“The people here in their speech and customs are quite like those on the islands we have hitherto visited, still they seemed to me to be rather more civilized, more teachable and also cleverer. They showed far more business ability than the others in trading with the cotton-yarn and their other wares. Here for the first time I saw the cotton wrought into a short cloak. The people here are more respectable, and the women wear a narrow apron,

though, certainly, it only affords a very scanty covering. They have no sort of religion, and since they possess a sound human understanding, they will be quickly converted to Christianity.

"The island is flat and level, full of luxuriant greenery and very fertile. I am convinced that they sow and reap corn and other crops the whole year round. The trees here are quite different from those at home; many of them have the most diverse sorts of branches and yet they all grow from the same root. It is a veritable wonder! And what a number of varieties there are, all close together! One branch for example, has the leaves of the bulrush, while another has the feathered leaves of the pistachio, and thus five or six quite different species are found on one stem! One would imagine that they were grafted on; but, on the contrary, the natives do not take the trouble to cultivate plants; they all grow wild here.<sup>1</sup> Here the fish, too, are strangely different from ours; they are curved like dories and they gleam with the most brilliant colours in the world, blue, yellow, red and so on, and every one is marked differently from the others in an endlessly varied fashion. It is a wealth of colour that must fill every observer with astonishment and delight. There are also whales hereabouts. Except parrots and squirrels I have not seen any animals, not even sheep or goats. Certainly I was not on land for any length of time, but it was about midday, and if there had been any animals here, I must have noticed them. A cabin-boy is said to have seen a large snake."

*Wednesday, 17th October 1492.*

"About midday I left the anchorage with the intention of sailing round the island, following the line of the coast in a south-easterly direction, for all the Indians were agreed that Samoet, the gold-island, lay in the south. But Martin Pinzon, the captain of the *Pinta*, to whom I had entrusted three of the natives from San Salvador, came to me and informed me that one of the Indians had given him to understand quite definitely that the voyage northwards round Fernandina was much easier. Since, moreover, the wind was adverse, I ordered the ships to turn back and steer north-north-west. When we were two leagues from the northern

<sup>1</sup> Columbus here saw for the first time the wonder of the primeval forest with its impenetrable, tangled mass of branches and climbing plants. Hence this misunderstanding.

point of the island a marvellous harbour opened out, with an entrance, or rather with two entrances, for an island lay in the middle. But both entrances were very narrow, though the inner basin of the harbour afforded room for a hundred ships, provided that it was everywhere of sufficient depth. I wished to determine this accurately by taking soundings. So I cast anchor and went in with boats, for the entrance was as a matter of fact too shallow for the ships. Since, possibly, a river discharged itself here, I had ordered some barrels to be brought, so as to be able to take back drinking-water. On shore I met eight or ten Indians, who approached us and invited us to their village, which was in the vicinity. So I sent my crew thither to fetch water and gave them some armed men to accompany them. The distance was not very great, but nevertheless I had to wait two hours until they returned. Meantime I took a stroll under the trees, which were beyond all description glorious to behold; they are as luxuriantly green as the trees of Andalusia in May, but are as different from them as day from night; and it is the same with every fruit, every blade of grass, every stone here, in short, with everything.

"The Indians here are of the same race as the others; they, too, have splendid figures, go about naked and give whatever they have in return for any trifle. I saw two ship's boys bartering pieces of earthenware or glass for javelins. The men who returned with the water told me they had gone into the Indians' huts and had found everything very tidy. For beds and covers they had a sort of net made of cotton-yarn (hammocks). The cabins of the Indians are built like tents, very high and furnished with excellent chimneys, but I did not see any village with more than twelve or fifteen dwellings. The married women alone wear a cotton apron, the girls not until they are over eighteen years old. There were mastiffs and small dogs here. The sailors had met a man who wore in his nose an ordinary gold coin with an inscription. I was very much annoyed that they had not secured it and paid any price that was asked for it; but they replied that the man would not risk selling it. What sort of a coin may it have been, I wonder?

"Thereupon I returned to the ship, raised anchor and sailed farther in a north-westerly direction up the whole coast to the point where it takes a bend towards the west. Now, however, the Indians were of opinion that this island was smaller than Samoet, and that, in order to reach it sooner, it would be best to sail back again. Since, too, the wind had veered round and was now in the

north-west, I tacked and sailed the whole night through mostly in a south-easterly direction, keeping a fair distance from the land, for it was pitch-dark, with a cloudy sky, and it rained from midnight until dawn; in this region it has rained more or less every day."

*Thursday, 18th October 1492.*

"When the weather cleared I continued my voyage round the island, so long as the wind was favourable, but did not land in the evening and hoisted sail again at daybreak."

*Friday, 19th October 1492.*

"Early today I sent the *Pinta* to the east-south-east, the *Niña* to the south-west, while I myself steered a south-east course. Both ships were to keep on the course ordered until about midday, then turn and rejoin me. We had not been three hours under sail when an island came into view. There we remained, and all three ships met again before midday at its northern point. This north cape is itself an island, which is protected from the sea by a reef and, to all appearance, is separated from the main island by another small isle. My companions from San Salvador called this island Samoet; I gave it the name of Isabella. From that cape the coast runs westwards for twelve leagues and ends in a point which I named Cape Formoso. In the north-east the coast forms a deep bay. I would have willingly landed there, for the shore is magnificently wooded, but the water was too shallow, and I had perforce to remain a good distance out at sea. The wind, too, bore in the direction of Cape Formoso, I therefore came to anchor there, where there were no shoals. This cape juts out in wide sweeps towards the west and is very beautiful.

"The beach is low and stony at first, but then becomes sandy and remains so throughout. The island is not so flat as the others already visited, there is a certain amount of rising ground on it, which can hardly be called a hill, but which gives it its special charm, and it is the most delightful island I have seen up till now. It is densely wooded with gorgeously green tall trees, has evidently an abundant supply of water and is everywhere so delightful that one does not know where to look first. I am convinced that many plants and trees grow here that Spaniards would find of great use in the manufacture of colours and drugs, but I regret

very much that I cannot describe them. As we drew near to the land such a deliciously sweet scent of blossoms was wafted towards us that there can be nothing in the world more charming. No villages were to be seen, these lie in the interior of the islands, my Indians tell me, and they have a king who also rules over the adjoining islands and is said to wear clothes and many gold ornaments. But I do not put much faith in this, for I understand very little of what the Indians say, and moreover they are so poor that the trifle of gold that the king may wear will seem a great deal to them. Still I mean to visit his abode tomorrow and have speech with him. I have no intention, however, of investigating the country more thoroughly, as I should not be finished in fifty years, but I mean to have discovered as much new land as is at all possible, until with God's help I return home, as I trust in April. I shall only make a longer stay at any place where there is a great deal of gold and spices, so that I may be able to bring a goodly amount with me. I hope to find this, and therefore I am eager to get on as quickly as possible."

*Saturday, 20th October 1492.*

"Very early today I lifted anchor and sailed to the south-west point of the island. The king's village was said to be situated there. The water, however, was so shallow that I could not get near the coast. So I turned back. But the wind was so light that it was only during the night that I made any headway."

*Sunday, 21st October 1492.*

"At ten o'clock in the forenoon the three ships came to anchor near the north cape. After dinner I went on shore, but found only a few individual huts, whose occupants had apparently fled from us in fright; they had left their goods and chattels behind. I gave orders that nothing should be touched and confined myself to making a survey of part of the island in company with the captains and some of the men. It truly surpasses all the others in loveliness. Broad lagoon-like lakes are framed in magnificent woods and the vegetation is as green and luxuriant as in Andalusia at springtime. The singing of the birds is so sweet that one always wants to stop and listen. Hosts of parrots darken the sun, and there are so many different species of birds and they are so

unlike those in Spain that one is quite lost in amazement. There are also innumerable species of trees here, each with its own peculiar fruit and its own special scent. It is a great pity that I cannot give a more detailed description of them, but I am bringing specimens of them all home with me. On our walk back we saw beside one of the lakes a serpent which glided into the water in front of us. We rushed after it, for the water was shallow, and we killed it with our lances. I am bringing its skin with me for your majesties; it is seven spans in length. As to plants, I found the aloe here again. I intend to have ten hundredweight of it taken on board tomorrow, for it ought to be very valuable.

“As we were looking for good drinking-water we came upon a village whose inhabitants fled to the forest after securing their possessions against us. Here also I saw to it that not the smallest thing was removed. Thereupon some of the men drew near to us, and one of them even ventured to come right up to me. I presented him with a few bells and some small strings of beads, and by way of clinching our friendship I asked him for some water. And we were scarcely on board again when the inhabitants of the village came with calabashes well filled with water, and they were greatly delighted to do us a service with it. I ordered each of them to be given a string of glass beads, and they promised to come back the next day. I was anxious to have all the water-barrels of our ships filled, for I should like, if the weather remains fine, to sail round the island in order to find the Indian king; perhaps he will give me his gold. After that I shall sail to a large island that should offer ships ample opportunities for trade; my Indians call this island Colba (Cuba); from the indications they give me it is probably Cipango. Close to it there is another island just as large, which is called Bohio. I shall visit whatever lies on the way to it as we sail past; everything else depends on the supplies of gold and spices which I find there. For the rest it is settled that I shall proceed to the mainland, search for the city of Quinsay, hand over your majesties’ letters to the Grand Khan and return with his answer.”

## CHAPTER XIX

### LANDING ON CUBA

THE king who was said to reside on the island was not to be seen, his subjects impressed Columbus unfavourably and rain and wind made the projected voyage round the island difficult, so he ordered a cargo of aloe-wood to be taken on board and turned towards the south-west on the 24th October. According to the statements of the natives there lay in that direction the much larger and very rich island of Cuba, and this no doubt was Cipango (Japan). After some visits to smaller islands that lay on the route, he arrived on the 28th October at a coast extending for a great distance from south-east to north-west. He soon found a secure harbour at the mouth of a river, and there he cast anchor. He called this harbour San Salvador, but learned investigators are by no means agreed as to the place where he first landed on Cuba; it cannot, however, have been very far from the present-day harbour of Nipe in the north-west. In honour of the Infanta Don Juan, Columbus gave the island the name of Juan, after the usual solemn ceremony of taking possession. Thus the proper order of rank was observed in these first five christenings: first the Saviour, then the Mother of God, the king, the queen and lastly the crown prince.

This new land, like all the others, enchanted Columbus with its beauty and fertility. The tropical splendour of the palm-forests surpassed all that he had yet seen, and the mountainous aspect of Cuba reminded him greatly of Sicily. The inhabitants fled to the woods in terror at the sight of the ships and on the landing of the strangers. Their cabins were empty, but the fires still burned on the hearths. Fishing gear lay about everywhere—nets made of string and palm-bast, horn fish-hooks and harpoons of bone, all very carefully and cleverly wrought. In the cabins, which were roofed with palm-bark and were very tidy, there were even some attempts at furniture and works of art, wooden statues with women's faces and carved masks, which probably served some religious purpose. Tame birds hopped and fluttered about,

and near the cabins there were some dogs; but these gave no audible sign of their presence, they could not bark. There dwelt here an industrious little community of fishermen who, as Columbus thought he could infer, engaged in fishing on a large scale and took their ocean booty for sale into the interior of the island; in that quarter, therefore, there was bound to be a populous city.

This conjecture was confirmed by the increasing number of dwellings observed, when the ships on the following day ran into another river-mouth farther to the north-west. The Indians on board, who already considered themselves indispensable interpreters and guides, said that a voyage round the island would take about twenty days, only ten days were needed to sail to the mainland, but Cuba could be reached in four days; the harbours here were frequented by the ships of the Grand Khan, and the natives were in great fear of them. That was the only reason for their fleeing whenever the Spaniards were sighted.

After a long conversation with them about these contradictory statements Martin Pinzon betook himself to the admiral and explained to him that it was now clear that what he had taken for the island of Cuba or Cipango was in reality the mainland for which they were searching, and that Cuba was simply the nearest large city. There was little use speaking of the Grand Khan here; evidently the king of this province was at war with him.

These conclusions chimed in so well with the admiral's observations, with his ardent hopes and with the whole programme of the voyage that he, too, was convinced that he had already set foot on the Asiatic mainland and was now only a hundred leagues or so distant from one of the cities Saitun or Quinsay which were shown on Toscanelli's chart. Cipango must therefore be one of the islands that now lay behind him. An observation incorrectly made—or wrongly transmitted by Las Casas—in taking the bearings on the 30th October, seemed to confirm this hypothesis. He accounted for the panic of the natives by the fact that the ships of the Grand Khan apparently came on slave-raids to these parts. His most urgent task, therefore, was to get into communication with the Grand Khan himself, or, in the first instance, with the princes of this province at the coast of which his ships were lying. And that certainly would be difficult to accomplish without getting into touch with the aborigines. One of his sailors who had formerly been in Guinea and had carried out successfully dangerous errands of that sort, declared himself ready to under-



take the mission, but the Indians who were to accompany him as interpreters made it a condition that the admiral should afterwards release them at their native island of Guanahani. Of the Grand Khan they always spoke with superstitious dread.

In the early morning of the 1st November Columbus sent two boats on shore, but they found the place completely deserted. They had strict orders not to touch anything in the huts, and after they had waited for some time an Indian was seen in the distance who seemed to be watching the strangers. Thereupon in obedience to orders they returned to their boats and to the ship. On the following afternoon the inhabitants had so far overcome their fear that they ventured near the beach, nor did they take flight when a boat from the ship drew near to the shore. In this boat stood one of the Indian interpreters who shouted to his fellow-countrymen that they need have no fear; the Spaniards were peaceable people, who had no dealings with the Grand Khan and who left valuable presents behind them wherever they went. Then he leaped into the sea and swam to the shore. Two natives took him by the arm and led him into one of the cabins. There they gave him a thorough cross-questioning, and now the beach swarmed with naked, brown figures. Canoes shot out from the thicket at the shore and a race to the ships began. The savages hoped to trade with the strangers; they had already sent messengers into the interior of the island to a king who lived four days' journey away, with news of the arrival of the wonder-ships and they expected traders to arrive in three days to whom they hoped to be able to sell what they had got from the ships. They were not put out, however, when the trading to which they had looked forward did not take place, for they had only cotton and worthless stuff to offer. But the admiral had forbidden all barter in which gold was not exchanged. Gold—*nucay* was their word for it—they did not possess; only one of them wore as an ornament a small piece of silver in his nostrils. For the rest they were a peaceable, friendly folk, who, once their confidence had been won, moved about the strange ships with easy assurance and, like children, never tired of handling and gazing with astonishment at all those wonderful things that could only have come down from heaven.

Should Columbus wait for the arrival of the traders or even of the king? In any case it was more seemly to greet in his residence a monarch at whose coast one was lying at anchor, even though his

kingly dignity was of no great account. The admiral could not leave the fleet himself; so he despatched an embassy consisting of two men. One of them was Rodrigo de Jerez, the other Luis de Torres, a baptized Jew who knew Hebrew, Chaldaic and some Arabic, languages which were useful in the seaport towns of the Levant. They took with them presents for the king and a letter of introduction from the Spanish monarchs to foreign potentates, expressing their wish to enter into friendly relations with them. They took, besides, specimens of drugs and spices in order to ascertain if they were to be found on the island, also glass beads and other toys, with which to buy victuals for their return journey. Columbus enjoined them particularly to make themselves acquainted with the situation, the boundaries and the distances of the provinces and cities and also with the river-courses and the coastal harbours; he wrote down for them those names that were known to him. One of the Indian interpreters and a native from the fishing village accompanied them. They were expected to be back again in six days.

During the time of waiting Columbus ordered the ships to be drawn up on the beach in turn and caulked. He himself explored the neighbourhood, in order to find his bearings and to acquire some knowledge of the most valuable products of the land. But every hill was so densely wooded that no general view could be got, and the sailor from the *Pinta* who said that he had seen cinnamon-trees proved to have been mistaken. The only plants that grew here were *mames*—a vegetable with roots like a turnip, tasting like chestnuts—and an immeasurable thicket of cotton. There was no sign of cultivation anywhere, everything grew wild in an inexhaustible abundance, spring and autumn, blossom and fruit on the same branch. As on the other islands aloes were also found, and gum-mastic trees much more luxuriant than those that Columbus got to know on Mediterranean voyages to Chios. The Indians used the gum as a cure for pains in the stomach. When he showed them cinnamon and pepper they said that these were to be found in abundance farther down in the south-east, and when they were shown gold and pearls they pointed in the same direction. There, ornaments like these were worn in the nose and ears and round the neck, arm and leg. But no one would venture to go there, for one-eyed people and man-eaters with dogs' snouts, who would bite off anyone's head and drink his blood, lived in that region. And again and again the name Bohio recurred,

an island or province where all those valuable articles he sought were to be found. If his ambassadors did not return with any very enticing news, confirming the statements of Marco Polo, then he would have to attempt to discover this promised land. He thought he would be able to deal with the man-eaters, unless, after all, that was only a fairy-tale.

The ambassadors came back punctually on the 6th November and gave their report. After a journey of twelve leagues they had reached a village with about fifty large cabins and at least a thousand inhabitants, who received the unusual visitors with great ceremony. The two Spaniards were taken into the largest of the dwellings. There they had to sit on chairs, while the masculine population of the village squatted on the ground round about them. And then the Indian interpreter made his speech, telling them what amiable people the strangers were and so forth, for Torres had tried in vain to start a conversation with Hebrew, Chaldaic and Arabic. After that the men made room for the women, for they, too, wished to hear the speech. Then both men and women crowded round the ambassadors to kiss their hands and feet, for they were sure they came from heaven, and they fingered their beards and garments again and again, to assure themselves that they had actually creatures of flesh and blood before them. Did they have pepper and cinnamon? No, they did not have them; these were down there in the south-east; and as for gold and pearls and silk raiment, there was no need to ask about them, for every one here ran about naked, and the little community was as poor as the fisher folk on the beach. But in order to regale their guests they eagerly brought out everything they had to eat. They planted *mames* in their fields, grew cotton, spun it and wrought it into nets and hammocks; in some of the houses there were large bundles of it, both raw and spun. No quadrupeds were to be seen here either, apart from the silent dogs, but there were flocks of geese and partridges and other birds. The aborigines had never heard of Saitun, Quinsay or Cathay, and the Grand Khan, too, was unknown to them.

The ambassadors had afterwards visited some other villages, which consisted only of a few huts in the forest. As there was no indication of any city in the vicinity, they had returned, although the inhabitants of the large settlement had given them a pressing invitation to stay with them for a few days. Half the population of the village would have preferred to set out forthwith in order to

reach heaven with the Spaniards. But the Spaniards could not allow that. Only the chief along with his son and his attendant accompanied them back to the ship. Columbus had a long conversation with him about the land and the people in the neighbourhood. He would have liked to take this smart young fellow with him to Spain, nor did the latter seem unwilling to go, but in the evening he did not appear to be quite at his ease on the beach and in the vicinity of the ships, and he took his departure, promising to return the next morning, but he was not seen again. It would have been too risky to detain him, for the ships were lying on the beach to be re-caulked.

One thing more the ambassadors were able to report: on the way they had come across natives who carried in their hand something like a half-burnt piece of wood; it consisted of vegetables made into a roll, which both men and women were accustomed to smoke. Bishop Las Casas, who found this note in the admiral's diary, adds on his own account: "There are dried vegetables which are wrapped in a broad leaf, also dried, and are like the little muskets which children carry in Spain at Easter. They are lit at one end and at the other end the smoke is sucked and, in a manner, drunk by inhaling. It intoxicates and produces sleep, but at the same time it is refreshing. These muskets are called *tabacos*. Many Spaniards also use them, and if I upbraided them for this barbarous habit, they answered that it was impossible for them to give up this enjoyment. What profit they gain from it is a mystery to me."

The sole result of this embassy to the Indian chief, therefore, was the first acquaintance of Europeans with the tobacco-plant and the habit—or vice—of smoking.

## CHAPTER XX

### MARTIN PINZON MAKES HIMSELF INDEPENDENT

THE ships were repaired, but calm weather held them up for several days. Columbus could not put to sea again until the 12th November. The day before he had ordered five young Indians who came on board to be detained so as to have guides who were acquainted with the locality. He meant to take them afterwards to Spain, where they might render good service as interpreters. This was, to begin with, the only possible way of enabling future government officials to understand the inhabitants of all these islands, and this problem was much more easily solved here than in Guinea, for the language of the Cubans was very similar to that of the people of Guanahani, while in Guinea every negro tribe had its own dialect and no one understood his neighbour. Columbus knew, however, from his experience on Portuguese slave-ships that men carried off by force from their native land were never properly acclimatised unless their wives too were with them. So he had had seven girls and women seized on the coast of Cuba; one of these women was married and had three children. At night the husband also came on board with the whole family and begged so hard to be allowed to sail with them that the admiral let him have his wish. Women, too, as he knew, were much more successful than men in teaching their own language; they were more talkative and readily engaged in conversation with the Spaniards, while the men were rather taciturn and not inclined to indulge in aimless talking.

Meanwhile Columbus was unwilling to sail farther north without receiving definite news of the Grand Khan, in case he should be caught by wintry weather. If his instruments for taking observations were correct, though certainly they seemed to be out of order, then he was much farther north than he had hitherto supposed. No one could tell whether there might not be some projecting barrier of land to block his way. He was convinced that Cuba was a peninsula that jutted far out in a south-easterly direction from the mainland of Asia. If he remained in the

south and sailed round this peninsula he would certainly find another route to the city of Saitun, which according to Toscanelli's chart lay in the extreme south. The main object of the voyage, after all, was to get into touch with the Grand Khan.

Moreover, the country or island of Bchio lay in a south-easterly direction. But whenever this name was mentioned his interpreters became terrified; it was certain death to go there, the cannibals would devour them all! He would find gold, too, and much more of it on the island of Babeque which lay right in front of them in the east and was far nearer. The natives there assembled in large bands at night by the light of torches and made whole bars of it by beating it with hammers. The admiral now heard the word "caniba" for the first time and he immediately connected it with the Grand Khan; evidently these natives were his subjects. He had no belief in man-eaters; probably these cannibals were only tribes who were less timid, more intelligent, more warlike, perhaps, and therefore also more civilized than those he had already encountered. Now and again they might possibly have carried off with them as slaves the prisoners they had taken here on the coast. Hence the fairy-tale about men-eaters. Indeed, had not he and his Spaniards incurred the same suspicion by keeping some of the aborigines on board and not liberating them? But, since Martin Pinzon was incessantly harping on the gold-island of Babeque, he had finally agreed to attempt to land there. At that island they would be half-way on their voyage to Bohio. The Cubans who had been last seized were stowed on the *Pinta*. When Pinzon showed them gold, they, too, always shouted "Babeque" and pointed to the west. But they were just as terrified at Bohio as the natives from Guanahani.

Wind and current, however, were so unfavourable that the ships two days later had to seek shelter again on the coast of Cuba, and until the 20th November Columbus cruised about aimlessly in a ceaseless fight with storms. Instead of advancing he was thrown back and even driven northwards, with the result that he found himself again in the vicinity of the island of Isabella. He would have been glad to anchor there, but it was only a short distance from there to Guanahani, and he was afraid that his interpreters, who were longing for home, would take the chance of escaping. They had followed him willingly until then, because, as it now appeared, they had understood him to say

that he would allow them to go back to their homes, as soon as they had guided him to a coast where gold was plentiful. Several of the Cubans had escaped from the *Pinta* on the 17th in some unaccountable way. That sort of thing was not to be allowed to go any farther. Pinzon had evidently kept a very faulty look-out.

On the 20th November the admiral had to give up the attempt to reach Babeque as impracticable. He therefore gave orders to keep close to the coast of Cuba, where he could easily find a harbour in the event of a storm, and work forward in a south-westerly direction to the mysterious Bohio.

But the captain of the *Pinta* seemed unwilling to obey these orders. He got in front of the other ships, sailed in an easterly direction and was evidently determined to reach the gold-island of Babeque in spite of wind and weather. The statements made by his Indians had whetted his greed to such a degree that he completely lost his head. He commanded a ship which did not belong to him and was loaded with crown property. He was under the supreme command of the admiral and had bound himself to obey his injunctions. That may well have mortified his ambitious spirit for a considerable time now, for he was accustomed to be in command himself, and the many differences of opinion between the two men had long transformed his original friendly and enthusiastic feelings for Columbus into an irritation that was mutual. Would the enterprise have been undertaken at all without his help? Had the *Niña* not been paid for with his money? Hitherto there had been little prospect of his getting back even the capital he had invested in the undertaking. The search for the Grand Khan, on which the admiral was so set, would lead to nothing. In the end this search as well would be made without him. But Pinzon did not mean merely to cut his losses, he wanted also to prove to the commander-in-chief his superior shrewdness. The Cubans must surely have known what they were talking about. He forgot in this connection that until then the Indians' assertions had not been put to any test, and that they had rather been endeavouring to keep the ships near their own island, so as to have an opportunity of escaping. In any case he thought he was so sure of his facts this time that he could venture to steer towards Babeque on his own account. On the 21st November the *Pinta* disappeared on the horizon in this direction, and although Columbus ordered light-signals to

be sent out the whole night through, she was not to be seen even on the following day. Would she ever be seen at all? After this deliberate turning aside from the appointed route and after such a challenging act of insubordination, anything might be expected of a headstrong man like Pinzon. To stop and wait for him was impossible. The *Pinta* might be wrecked on the coast of Babeque, and if Pinzon really wanted to rejoin the admiral's ship he knew well enough where to find it. There was nothing else for it, therefore, but to sail south-west along the coast of Cuba, in accordance with the orders issued to the three ships. Then it would of necessity be seen whether Pinzon had planned a short voyage away from the main route in disobedience to orders, or had definitely withdrawn himself from the supreme command of the admiral.

But Pinzon's desertion had brought about precisely the situation which Columbus wished to avoid by taking the *Niña* in addition to the other two ships: his fleet now consisted of only two vessels, and his freedom of movement was thereby narrowly circumscribed. If one of the ships were wrecked there was no imagining what would become of the expedition.

On that account he sailed with redoubled caution and often did not venture at all to go near the coast in case he should endanger his ships. The Indians, too, grew more and more restless the farther they went towards the south-west, and their fears did not seem to be so entirely unfounded. For when a landing was about to be made on the 24th at Cape Campana near a large settlement, the aborigines came rushing upon the strangers with an evidently hostile intent and showed signs of attacking them. But when some of the Spaniards summoned up courage to leap ashore from the boats and shout to the savages some words in their own tongue, the Indians drew back. They gave no opportunity, however, of dealing with them, and their village was completely deserted. From the ships tall columns of smoke could be seen rising here and there; they were, no doubt, signals of warning to their neighbours. And when the Spaniards ventured to visit one of the forsaken villages again, their attention was attracted to some wicker baskets that hung from the door-posts of several of the houses. On closer inspection they discovered a well-packed human head in every one of them. Columbus attempted to reassure his men by explaining to them that these were certainly the heads of dis-



tinguished chieftains and that they were preserved in this manner as an honourable memorial. On the same day an old man had been overtaken who could not flee fast enough, and after being loaded with lavish gifts, he was sent back to his fellow-countrymen. But when the ships came in sight and the sailors went on shore to fetch wood and water or to set up a cross as a sign of annexation, nothing could entice the Indians to draw near, and although the land was densely populated, as was evident from the numerous villages and the well-tilled fields, they all scattered in panic, wherever the Spaniards came into view.

It was only by chance that an encounter with the Cubans took place on the 5th December. A storm compelled the ships to anchor in a small bay, and Columbus along with some others employed the time of waiting in taking a look round the neighbourhood. Magnificent canoes belonging to the natives lay on the beach, and as Columbus and his companions were walking among the trees they came upon a shipbuilding yard, in which one of those canoes was lying just ready for launching. The neat workmanship and the beautiful carving with which the canoe was ornamented roused the greatest admiration. The Spaniards climbed a hill and suddenly found themselves standing on a broad plateau with gardens and fields and in the midst of an Indian village. The inhabitants were completely taken by surprise at seeing the strangers appear from that side and they scattered in wild flight into the forest. But Columbus had brought one of his Indians with him. He succeeded in calming the fugitives, and when bright-coloured beads, copper rings and similar enticements were held out to them, a few of them came nearer and seemed to gain some confidence. They were just as naked and poor as the other dwellers on the coast. They wore no gold ornaments, but they carried spears with sharp points that had been hardened by fire: some of these Columbus purchased. But since the handful of Spaniards were pitted against an ever-increasing number of red-skins, Columbus thought it prudent to turn back again. A large and menacing crowd of Indians followed him, and after he had stepped into the long-boat at the beach, one of the savages approached the stern of the boat and standing there made a speech which the admiral took to be an address of welcome. The crowd on the beach accompanied their chief's words with loud cries, lifting their hands threateningly towards heaven. Columbus still

had no suspicion of anything amiss, when suddenly his Indian interpreter grew as yellow as wax and, shivering with fear, tried to make him understand that this was a declaration of war and that they meant to kill them all!

Columbus now seized a cross-bow which one of the sailors had ready, showed the weapon to the savages and tried to make it clear to them that it carried a long distance and that he was in a position to kill them all with it. Then he drew his dagger and made a threatening gesture with it. Thereupon the Indians fled. Columbus now ordered the long-boat to proceed some distance up the river which flowed into the bay, and this daring action seemed to impress the Indians. He landed near a village and the natives now came nearer quite peaceably. "I walked up to them," he relates, "and offered them some pieces of bread; then I asked them for some of their spears and gave them in exchange beads, chains and copper rings. Thereupon they became quite confident, came into the long-boat and gladly gave us whatever they had. My companions meanwhile had killed a turtle, the shell of which still lay in the boat. The ship's boys gave them some small pieces of it and received in return a whole handful of assegais or javelins. I also visited one of their houses, which was not very large but was provided with two doors, as is the general rule here. The ceilings were so richly adorned with snail-shells, mussels and other objects that I thought I had got into a temple. But when I asked them if they said prayers here, they shook their heads in disclaimer, and breaking some of the ornaments from the ceiling they gave them to me."

This shows therefore that the Indians of this region were not so timid and defenceless as those farther west and on the other islands. They had evidently learned that some of their fellow-countrymen had not returned home again after visiting the outlandish ships. This first encounter with hostile Indians had passed off well enough so far, but now it would no longer be safe to venture any distance from the ships so incautiously and carelessly as they had hitherto done.

On the 5th December Columbus had at last reached the end of the Cuban coast, which now took a bend to the south and seemed farther on to jut out towards the south-west. He had now to make a decision. Nothing more had been seen of the *Pinta* since her disappearance. If he now turned southwards and followed still farther the line of the Cuban coast, circum-

navigating this land which he took for a peninsula and perhaps coming across the mainland proper lying behind it, then a reunion of the three ships was quite impossible. This attempt was too risky with only two ships. If the *Pinta* did not return, then the main object of the expedition—the visit to the Grand Khan—could no longer be accomplished. Columbus accordingly still kept to his intention of sailing across to Babeque on the chance of getting hold of the *Pinta* again. But this time again it looked as if wind and weather had conspired not to allow him to get near Babeque; for the second time he had to abandon the attempt. In these circumstances nothing else remained but to keep to the course he had hitherto followed. Pinzon would perhaps seek him on this course, and since a new, large island came into view farther east, he made straight for it.

Thus on the 6th December 1492 he arrived at the island of Haiti, which he named Hispaniola. According to the statements made by his Indians, this was said to be the notorious island of Bohio, and their terror was so desperate that, for the nonce, he could not depend on them as intermediaries for getting into touch with the so-called cannibals. He stayed for a day in a harbour which he named St. Nicholas, cruised on the west coast of the newly discovered island and then sailed northwards, keeping in an easterly direction along the north coast. If the *Pinta* did not put in an appearance then there was nothing else for it but to think of returning home.

The two ships sailed slowly from one cape to the other, carefully taking soundings in the unknown fairway. There was still no sign of the *Pinta*, and as a storm was brewing on the 7th December and heavy rain was falling, the admiral gave orders to come to anchor and wait for better weather in a large harbour which he called Puerto de la Concepción (the harbour of the Immaculate Conception).

## CHAPTER XXI

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS ON BOARD

ADVERSE winds and rainy weather compelled Columbus to remain in the harbour de la Concepción. This afforded him a welcome opportunity of becoming acquainted with the surrounding country and of getting into contact with the aborigines, who seemed to be as shy and mistrustful as the Cubans had been in these last days. None of the brown figures that were seen now and again in the distance came near the shore to greet the strangers. Some Indian spies taken by surprise by Spaniards who were strolling about, had disappeared the next moment into the darkness of the primeval forest. During the day wisps of smoke waved like flags on the hills, and at night these signal fires glowed like the malignant eyes of some fantastically large, black beast of prey crouching to make a leap. Preparations had evidently been made here against sudden attacks from the sea; well-tilled fields stretched as far as the harbour, but the few huts that were on them were uninhabited; apparently the villages lay hidden well in the interior of the island. Was the fear of the Indians who accompanied the admiral anything more than merely their anxiety to induce the admiral to make a speedy return to their more familiar native land? Or did this terrible, silent forest, which filled the valleys like a green sea and surged up the mountain-sides, really conceal the terrors at which these inoffensive children of San Salvador trembled and grew pale?

Armed scouts who pushed their way far into the interior on the 10th and 11th December found nothing but forsaken sites of fires and an extraordinarily luxuriant wilderness, through which, however, broad paths led into the interior. On the 12th Columbus ordered a large cross to be erected at the eastern entrance of the harbour as a sign of occupation. Then he sent three men with orders to bring back some red-skins by guile or by force. They came across a group of aborigines, but they only caught one woman who had been abandoned by her companions.

The woman was young and pretty and wore a small piece of gold in her nose. Her fears were all forgotten when she found on board some natives of Cuba who spoke her own language. Columbus gave her dresses, beads, brass rings and little bells and had her rowed to the shore again. Three of his Indians and three sailors were to take her home. The six men who accompanied her came back in the middle of the night, but they had not ventured to go near the village. They said that the young woman had been so delighted with her sojourn on the ship that she would have preferred to come straight back with them again; she had shown them the way to her dwelling with great readiness; in any case a large number of visitors from the land might be expected that day, the woman would see to that.

As the admiral was very anxious to satisfy himself as to the wealth of the island and to make friends with the natives, so that they should willingly accept their new relationship as subjects, he sent a second embassy to the village. This time the embassy consisted of nine men on whose adroitness he could rely, along with one of his Indians as interpreter. After a journey of several hours the Spaniards reached a large village with over a thousand cabins, but as soon as they were seen the inhabitants left everything lying and fled into the forest. The interpreter ran after them and shouted to them that they need have no fear, the strangers did not come from Canaba but from heaven and brought magnificent gifts with them. This proved effective. Immediately a swarm of about two thousand savages surrounded the Spaniards and touched their heads, still very timidly, in token of friendship. The interpreter said something more to them, and when they had quite recovered from their fear they rushed to their cabins and brought out everything they had in the way of food—fish and, above all, their chief means of subsistence—bread made of lumps of the yam-root which was also cultivated there in large quantities. When the interpreter told them that the admiral of the ship in which the white men had come wished a parrot, they brought a great number of these birds and gave them as many of them as they wanted to take, saying that if the white men would stay overnight, they would bring them a great deal more from the hills. Their band of Indians rushed up, carrying in triumph on a palanquin the woman who had been allowed to return to her husband, and they, too, was among them, and they and again how

grateful they were to the admiral for his friendliness and his gifts. In short the Spaniards were enchanted with the liberality and ingenuousness of these Indians, who, they assured the admiral, were incomparably more honourable and trustworthy than any of the aborigines they had yet seen, and who were also a far handsomer race, the men as well as the women. Two of the women had such fair complexions that they might easily have been taken for Spaniards. All this, certainly, sounded rather exaggerated to Columbus, for he had hitherto had nothing but pleasant experiences with all the natives. He was better pleased to hear that his men were no less enthusiastic about the beauty and fertility of this island, about its wealth of flowers and fruit, mastic-trees, aloes and cotton, of birds and fish and crystal-clear water which flowed in delightful rivers through the valley they had just seen; there was no part of Spain that could compare with it. Was there any gold? They had certainly not seen anything of it, but, of course, nothing else was to be expected from a first, hurried visit.

The return visit of the Indians, however, did not take place, and when Columbus two days later—on the 14th he had sailed northwards over to the island of Tortugas—attempted to go in the boat some distance up the river near which the village his men had visited was said to lie, the few natives whom he saw still ran away in terror.

On the 16th, he weighed anchor before dawn and sailed out of the harbour under a brisk east wind. On the voyage he noticed a small canoe with a single Indian and, as there was a heavy sea running, he ordered both the man and his canoe to be taken on board. He presented the man with the usual beads, small bells and brass rings and took him with him for part of the voyage to a village near the coast, which seemed to have been recently built, for the huts were quite new. Here Columbus cast anchor. The Indian rowed ashore at once and, frantic with delight, told what had happened to him. But the news had already been spread that the strangers on the big ships were kind people and soon the beach swarmed with hundreds of natives. One of them plucked up courage to clamber on board, another followed him, and soon troops of them came swimming out to the ships. They did not bring any presents, but some of them had very large pieces of gold in their ears or their noses, and these they gave over willingly. Columbus was

anxious that they should be treated in the most friendly manner, since, as he says in his diary, he already looked on them as subjects of the Spanish monarchs soon to become good Christians. When he heard that their king was also on the beach he sent him a present which was received with great ceremony. The king was a youth of twenty-one. He had his old tutor with him and another counsellor who communicated the news to him. They had also to reply for him; he scarcely opened his lips himself. One of the Indians whom Columbus had sent on shore told him that the Christians yonder on the two ships came from the skies, were searching for gold, and for that reason were on the voyage to the island of Babeque. "That is right," replied the king, "there is a great deal of gold there," pointing out to the Spaniard who had handed the admiral's present to him the course that would have to be taken. The ships could be at Babeque in two days, and if anything was wanted from his country he would willingly put it at the disposal of the strangers. The king and all his attendants, men as well as women, were stark naked, and none of them seemed to be ashamed of it. Both men and women were strikingly handsome. Had they been clothed and their complexions less exposed to wind and weather, they could not have been distinguished from Spaniards. They were stronger and more vigorous than the inhabitants of the other islands and they had pleasant voices. No trace of any religion could be discovered among them either.

In the evening the king paid his return visit to the flagship. The admiral received him with all due honour and explained to him that he had come as the ambassador of the ruler of Castile, who was the mightiest prince in the whole world. But neither the Indians who acted as interpreters nor the king believed that; they were firmly convinced that the strangers came from the skies and that the kingdom of Castile was not of this world. Columbus had some European food set before his guest, but he only took a single bite of everything and handed the rest to his counsellors, his tutor and his suite. The visit passed off in so friendly a manner that Columbus was convinced that a Spanish settlement here would only require, so to speak, "one lieutenant and ten men" to keep the whole island under control. "The natives," he wrote that same evening in his diary, "seem born to be led and kept at work, either cultivating the land or doing anything else that may be necessary. All that is needed here is

to build cities, accustom the people to wear clothes and make them familiar with our customs."

As an easterly wind next day made further progress impossible, the admiral ordered the men to put out some nets for fishing, and the Indians were delighted to help them at their work. Afterwards he sent a deputy along with the secretary and some others to the village. They were fortunately able to barter some beads for several pieces of gold. And this, too, from a man who was described as a cacique. He showed them a piece of gold-foil as large as a hand and evidently wished to sell it. When they were about to deal with him, he suddenly disappeared into his house, where he cut up the gold-foil into pieces. Then he came back with a small piece, sold it, fetched the next bit, and so on—each time a bit and a good stroke of business. When the supply was at an end, he indicated that he would send for more and bring it to the ship the next day. This cacique seemed to be a man of great authority. For that same evening a large canoe with forty natives arrived from the island of Tortugas, and the villagers who were on the shore at the time at once sat down amicably with them on the beach. Then the cacique rose and in menacing tones ordered the natives who had just arrived to go back immediately to their boat, at the same time snatching up some stones and throwing them into the sea. With the utmost deference the strangers obeyed the command and rowed away. The cacique also thrust a stone into the hand of the admiral's deputy for him to throw it into the sea as well. But either he was reluctant to do this or did not understand what was meant. This requisition to take part in what was evidently an official action was intended by the cacique to be a mark of respect for the admiral.

On the same day the fear of the Indian interpreters assumed a more substantial form. The sailors bought from the natives some long arrows, cut from reeds, with sharp tips hardened by fire. They had been told that these arrows came from the cannibals; they had also seen people with great scars where they had been bitten by the man-eaters. The admiral shook his head incredulously at this.

The 18th December was Lady-day. Columbus therefore ordered the ships to be decorated with flags, escutcheons and gaily coloured festoons, and a salvo of shots to be fired from the cannons. As a calm still persisted he was unable to sail



yet. Besides he had, of course, been informed about the mysterious cacique who was willing to procure more gold. Even although nothing very much might come of this, for there could hardly be a gold mine here, still, perhaps, he might learn where the gold actually came from. The king of Hispaniola, it was reported immediately, had decamped in the early morning to his dwelling, which was about five miles away; and when Columbus sent men to the village in the afternoon to look for the cacique, they returned hurriedly with the news that the king, borne in a litter by four slaves, had just arrived again with a following of two hundred men. And, just as the admiral had sat down to his dinner in the cabin on the after-deck, his brown majesty appeared with all his horde, some in canoes, some swimming out to the ship. "When the king came on board," Columbus relates himself, "and saw that I was seated at table and about to jump up, he hastened towards me, showed that on no account would he allow me to go to meet him and be disturbed at my meal, and then sat down beside me. He is evidently pleased to make trial of our cooking again, I thought; so I ordered some food to be brought to him at once. Before he came down the steps to the cabin, he made a sign with his hand to his followers to remain behind. The men obeyed him with the greatest reverence and sat down on the deck. Only the two older attendants, presumably the tutor and the royal counsellor, followed him and sat at his feet. Every dish that was put before him the king only tasted by way of politeness; afterwards he sent whole platefuls to his people, who pounced upon them. He did the same with the drinks I offered him; he scarcely wet his lips with them and left what remained of these also to his attendants. He did everything with the most ceremonious gestures, saying very few words, but, so far as I could understand them, these were in the highest degree dignified and clear. His two attendants never took their eyes off him; they answered for him and spoke to him with the greatest awe. After the meal a slave brought him a girdle like those worn in Castile, but of different workmanship. The king took it and handed it to me along with two strips of very fine gold-foil. Apparently there is not much gold here, although I am convinced that the actual source of gold cannot be very far away and is very copious.

"I presented the king with one of my bed-curtains, which, as I noticed, took his fancy, also a valuable amber chain which

I wore round my neck, a pair of red shoes and a flask of orange-flower water, with the wonderful scent of which he was quite charmed. He and his attendants expressed the most profound regret that we were unable to make ourselves mutually intelligible to one another; but, nevertheless, I thought I could gather from what he said that he put his whole kingdom at my disposal, should I desire anything at all. From one of the chains which I ordered to be brought there hung a portrait of your majesties. I showed it to him and repeated what I had said the day before yesterday—that your majesties ruled over the greatest kingdom on the earth and that no mightier princes existed anywhere. I also showed him the royal banners and the flags with the cross and the royal initials. This made a deep impression on him, and he sought to make his two counsellors understand how mighty princes your majesties must be, since you had sent me down here so far from the skies without any misgiving. Of the rest of their words and gestures I only understood enough to know that they were lost in wonder and amazement.”

The king did not take his departure until the evening. The admiral ordered him to be taken back in his boat and a salute to be fired in his honour. On the beach the king stepped into his litter again and set off with his two hundred men. A high dignitary strode before him with the presents he had received. At a proper distance behind him another Court official carried the crown prince on his shoulders. According to the tale of one of the sailors who was on shore and saw the procession, the brother of the king brought up the rear, walking on foot and leaning on the arms of two Court officials who conducted him. A crowd of people ran after them. In obedience to a special command of the king, all the sailors down to the ship's boys, wherever they were seen, were received with all possible honour and most liberally regaled.

Some time after the brother of the king also paid a visit to the admiral and received the usual gifts of beads and so forth. Not till then did Columbus learn from him that the youthful ruler of the country was called a cacique in the native language, and that therefore the king and the business-like cacique, on whose return they had waited in vain, were one and the same person!

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE ADMIRAL'S SHIP IS WRECKED

**A**N old man, one of the suite of the king or cacique, gave the admiral such positive and seductive accounts of the nearness and the fabulous wealth of numerous gold-islands somewhere in the east, that the latter had no longer any rest. He would have liked there and then to carry off the garrulous old man as guide, but he thought it too risky to lose by an act of violence the friendship of a king who had so much power in these regions. He therefore set sail again early on the 19th December. But such a violent easterly gale rose that the ships could scarcely get out of the sound between Haiti and the small island of Tortugas, and for a second time they were compelled to seek shelter in a harbour. On the north coast of Haiti there was an unusually large number of very fine harbours, to the great delight of the viceroy, who was continually thinking of the future government of the new possessions. This harbour, in which the ships lay until the 23rd December, was so large that Columbus called it the Sea of St. Thomas, whose saint's day was the 21st December.

Columbus ordered the ships' boats to explore the extensive coast. The wonderful news of the arrival of the dwellers in the sky had spread far and wide, and everywhere the aborigines received them with guileless confidence, once they had got over their first fright at the spectacle of strangers disguised in clothes and hats. They brought along all they had, bread baked by themselves from yams (called "ayes" here), fish, drinking-water, plants, seeds, even parrots, without asking anything in return for them. Even the few crumbs of the gold, for which the strangers were so crazy, they gave for the merest trifle. The secretary or some other representative of the admiral always took part in these expeditions and kept a strict look-out to make sure that something was given in return for every gift, for the greed and licentiousness of the ships' crews would soon know no bounds any longer. They would have liked to seize everything without payment,

for were they not the victors and the new masters? The handsome women, too, threw them into a state of excitement that threatened to impel them to acts of violence. In contrast to the islands discovered earlier, where the women were jealously guarded from the eyes of the strangers, they moved about here with extraordinary freedom. They also worked in the fields, and they were often in the forefront when it was a question of offering the men food or getting them to stay for a while as they were passing by. In general, monogamy was the rule; the chief alone kept a harem of several women, but he was not allowed more than twenty. For Columbus all these tribes were already the subjects of the Spanish crown and pious Christians, and just because they were so inoffensive he was far more concerned for their welfare than for the satisfaction of his wild crew. On that account he strictly forbade his men to exploit them or give them any cause for complaint.

When the Spaniards went on shore, they were taken to the villages, entertained and loaded with gifts; they were carried shoulder-high across fields and through river-beds, and a howl of lamentation burst out when they took their departure: the natives did not want to let them go and implored them to stay with them for good. They swam to the ships after them, and flotillas of canoes went back and forth day and night. Men, women and children swarmed about the decks and crept with secret shiverings into every corner. The chiefs sent their representatives or appeared in person to pay their respects to the admiral, and they never came without bringing presents, victuals, seeds, from which they prepared a liquor, or a small piece of gold; on one occasion three fat ducks were even brought on board.

All the people here were astonishingly handsome and well-built, and although they had not a rag on their bodies and their brown skins were atrociously painted with glaring colours, to protect them from the sun, as Columbus now learned, still these inoffensive children of nature lived in decent, comfortable circumstances. The fields were everywhere in an exemplary condition, there seemed to be so little quarrelling among them that even the most primitive weapons were wanting, and chieftains or caciques, who enjoyed royal prestige and whose hint was a command, ruled over separate portions of the country, some of them no bigger than a village with the surrounding land and the part

of the beach belonging to it. The whole island was apparently divided into miniature states of this kind, in which distress and destitution were unknown. The soil was so fertile that every spade-thrust was rewarded with a thousandfold return, and these people made so few demands that there was no occasion for disputes with one another or for strife with their neighbours, who were just as peaceable as themselves. Only now and again a rumour of fierce savages, who occasionally visited their island and devoured their prisoners, would pass like a dark cloudlet across the untroubled sky of these fortunate creatures. Power and possession were alien ideas to them, at the most they gratified these desires by their passion for gambling. Both religion and intolerance were unknown to them. The tidings these strangers attempted to bring to them through the lips of interpreters of their own kith and kin, about a Christian God in the sky, with His saints in bright raiment, appealed to them as very beautiful. If the Spaniards here and there erected high crosses before which the ship's chaplain conducted an open-air service and the crew, murmuring their prayers, crossed themselves, the Indians assisted in the work with the greatest zeal, and they faithfully imitated any pious gestures and movements they saw, because, after all, by doing this they pleased their guests and especially the mighty admiral. They had no suspicion that this cross only too soon was to be transformed into a gallows and was to become the menacing arm of coercion and perpetual slavery.

One of the chiefs or caciques named Guacanagari, who lived farther west, had given the admiral a very pressing invitation, and had sent him, as the present given to a guest, a valuable belt artistically decorated with coloured stones and bones, from which there hung, instead of a purse, a mask with eyes, nose and tongue of beaten gold. Columbus sent his secretary with an escort to convey his thanks for the invitation and the present, and the ambassadors were received with special friendliness at the cacique's residence, which was in an unusually large village. They brought back with them webs of the cotton which the women of the residence wore—a sign of a higher civilization—parrots, and again some small pieces of gold. They gave warning of a veritable tribal migration of the Indians to the ships within the next day or two. But Columbus had just heard again so much about a vein of gold, which was said to be on Haiti itself in a region named Cibao, that he was anxious to get farther on,

and he set sail again on the 24th December. Cibao—that was evidently the long-sought Cipango at last!

The *Santa Maria* and the *Pinta* drifted, in very quiet weather before a light westerly breeze, out from the basin of the St. Thomas harbour to the open sea in an easterly direction.

Work that could not be put off and the numerous and often very fatiguing visits of the Indians had kept the admiral from his bed for two days, and that day he hoped to be able to take a complete rest for once. The fairway had already been sounded by the crew when they had rowed the day before yesterday to the cacique on the same course as the ships had to take. No one had even any thought of taking precautions. The sea was as smooth as an inland lake and the night was mild. The pilot knew his business, and it was the chief officer's watch—the ship would have to be left to their care for a few hours. By eleven o'clock Columbus was sound asleep.

The pilot had evidently only been waiting for this unguarded moment. His night-work, too, had made him sleepy. Today there was nothing to fear from the admiral's customary, unremitting supervision. In a low voice he called one of the ship's boys up to the wheel, showed him how to hold it and then crept to his bunk. The night-watch did not notice anything, or did not want to notice anything, although carelessness of that sort was most rigorously forbidden; a cabin-boy was never allowed to be trusted with the wheel. The whole incident shows how little Columbus could depend on the loyalty of his haphazard crew. The admiral had already noticed that Martin Pinzon's bad example had undermined his authority. Hence his restlessness; day and night he had to keep his eye on everything and, to all intents and purposes, do without sleep. But worse was still to come.

The fairly strong current drifted the *Santa Maria* landwards to a sandbank over which, in spite of her draught, she would have been able to sail quite easily at flood-tide. The surge was so heavy that it could be heard a mile away, and it must also have been seen during the day. But the cabin-boy noticed nothing, for the tide was on the ebb, and the night-watch had no doubt fallen asleep. The ship sailed so gently on to the sandbank that no one perceived the shock. It was only when the boy felt that the rudder had stuck fast that he shouted to the pilot; when he did not hear him he began to howl out loud, for he suspected some mishap.

The admiral was wakened by the shouting and was the first on deck. He saw at once that the ship lay with her broadside on the sandbank and would capsize in a short time. The chief officer, too, who had kept such a careless watch, now arrived in hot haste, and after him in course of time the whole crew. The cry: "All hands on deck!" and the warning of the ship's bell had thrown them into a state of terror. Were their lives in danger? In the darkness of the night no one saw rightly what had really happened, and an unreasoning panic swept over the men like a heavy sea. Columbus had at once given orders to launch the boat on the poop and cast the anchor a good distance astern of the ship. Perhaps it might still be possible to warp the vessel back and get it off the sandbank. The chief officer and the sailors in a desperate hurry let down the long-boat into the sea, threw in an anchor and leaped into the boat. But instead of obeying the order they simply rowed away to make themselves secure on the *Niña*, which lay farther out, without troubling themselves about the admiral and the rest of the crew! The captain, Vicente Pinzon, certainly knew what he had to do and would on no account allow them to come on board. There was nothing else for them but to return to the stranded ship, to which the *Niña's* boat had already hurried to give assistance.

To be abandoned faithlessly by one's own crew in the moment of supreme peril—desertion of the colours in face of the foe—it was the greatest crime a sailor or soldier could commit! Nor was there any possibility of compelling them to obey or even of punishing them; if he did so the rebellion that Martin Pinzon had unleashed would spring at his throat! Columbus had to summon all his pride and power of will to suppress his wrath and shame and to keep his head in this perilous moment. Before the *Niña's* boat arrived the fate of the *Santa Maria* was sealed. Columbus made another attempt to save the ship, falling back on the last resort—he ordered the mast to be cut away and the ship to be lightened by throwing out the cargo. A vain endeavour! The ship stuck hopelessly aground; the water merely rippled against the bow; there was no longer any trace of a current; the list to the starboard side became greater and greater. The hatches, too, burst open, as though they were getting ready to swallow the next flood-tide. Otherwise there was no damage done to the ship. As it was still the dead of night and the dense darkness made it impossible to tell the extent of the sandbank,

all the admiral could do was to row over to the *Niña* to see after the accommodation of his crew on that vessel and to wait for dawn.

Before doing this, however, he sent a delegation ashore in the long-boat, which had returned by this time. They were to go to the cacique, Guacanagari, who had invited him so urgently, acquaint him with the disaster and ask him for his help. His residence was only a mile-and-a-half inland. According to the messengers' report, when the cacique heard the news he burst into tears; but he ordered the whole district to be alarmed, and everyone had to go and give assistance. And as Columbus in the early morning twilight rowed across to the ill-starred spot and stepped from the sandbank into his stranded ship, a large flotilla of canoes came out from an adjacent river-mouth to the wreck for the purpose of lightening it. First of all the whole deck was rapidly cleared. The cacique, his brothers and his relatives either lent a hand personally, or helped in supervising the loads as they arrived at the shore. Guacanagari had at once set aside two of the large dwellings near the shore for the reception of the shipwrecked sailors and their goods and chattels. And, until these were ready, he ordered everything his people had dragged along with the greatest of zeal, to be piled up in the open near the houses and guarded by a picket. And these barbarians were so willing to help, so conscientious and honest that the entire cargo of the ship down to the last nail was made secure and not a buckle of a strap was missing. While this was being done the cacique frequently sent one of his suite to comfort the admiral, who was almost in despair at this great disaster and could not keep from weeping. There was no need for him to be troubled or distressed, he was assured; he was to consider all that Guacanagari possessed as his own. No wonder that the admiral, giving an account in his diary of the shipwreck and the disastrous Christmas day of 1492, cannot find sufficient words to describe the amiability, the honesty, the aptitude and cleverness of these naked barbarians, the excellence of their government, the magnanimity and the remarkable wisdom of their ruler. He goes so far as to assert that he could never have experienced anything like that on the coast of Spain.

A still more astonishing event occurred on the following day. The cacique paid a visit to the admiral, who was deeply troubled about the immeasurable consequences of the shipwreck, and offered



him as many canoes as he required, saying that, if the two houses were not enough, he had only to give the command and more would be put at his disposal. While the cacique was speaking to Columbus a strange canoe came in from another direction. It drew near to the *Niña* and the men on board of it kept shouting: "Chuk! Chuk!" At the same time they held up in their tawny hands several pieces of gold that glittered in the morning sunshine. "Chuk" was their word for the small bells which Columbus was accustomed to distribute; all the natives were crazy for them. The strangers wished to buy bells like these with their gold, and the admiral did not hesitate to deal with them.

The cacique witnessed this incident, and when the canoe had rowed away, he requested the admiral to keep a similar bell for him until the next day, when he would bring in exchange for it four pieces of gold, each as large as a hand! The admiral could scarcely conceal his delight and surprise, and he was still more astonished when he learned that a brisk trade by barter was already proceeding on the land. The natives were giving a piece of gold worth about £2 for the merest trifles, declaring that they would bring much more of it in a few weeks. When the cacique saw how pleased the admiral was at the prospect of such a yield of gold, he gave him to understand by signs that he knew where plenty of it was to be found. Columbus, he said, ought to take heart again; he would get as much gold as ever he wanted! In Cibao—again the name recurred, which Columbus always understood to mean Cipango!—there were such large quantities of that metal that it was considered of no value. But here, too, in Bohio—as he called the island of Hispaniola—there was enough of it, and in the province of Caribata as well! There could be no longer any doubt: despite everything, the longed-for land of gold had been found, and he had been within a hairs-breadth of sailing heedlessly past this coast, had the pilot's dereliction of duty not thrown him on the beach just at this spot!

The cacique, of course, had to wait and take a meal on board the *Niña*. Then Columbus accompanied him on shore, where he was liberally entertained. First a light repast was served, consisting of game, shrimps, several sorts of vegetables, fruits of all kind and bread—called "cassabi" (cassava) here. The cacique ate with such decorum and cleanliness that, as Columbus says emphatically, this alone would have proved him to be of gentle birth. After the meal he remained for a while at table,

and some herbs were brought to him; with these he gave his hands a good rub, in order, no doubt, to keep his skin smooth. Water was brought for the admiral to wash his hands. After this the cacique took his guest through some palm-groves that surrounded his residence. During their walk they were followed by a crowd of at least a thousand people, all of them naked. The cacique, however, wore a shirt and gloves which the admiral had given him. Nothing gave him such unbounded delight as these gloves. Afterwards, when they went to the beach, the admiral ordered a Turkish cross-bow and some arrows to be brought, and one of his men had to show his skill in shooting. The cacique did not have the slightest acquaintance with the use of arms, and he was absolutely amazed at the effect of the shots. But in the end he remarked that the people from Caniba were said to have some understanding of things like these. They were called Caribs, and they came there now and again to carry off slaves. They, too, had bows and arrows like these, but without iron, which was unknown there. Columbus tried to make it clear to him by means of signs that the king of Spain would bind these Caribs in chains and lay them at his feet and would extirpate them completely. By way of showing him that the Spaniards were able to do this, and would therefore be extremely valuable allies, he ordered a musket and a cannon to be fired. The cacique became quite frantic with amazement when he saw how easily these shots could penetrate objects. His brave subjects, however, flung themselves at full length on the ground in fear at the report of the gun and the thunder of the cannon. The admiral, on his departure, received a large mask with eyes, ears, etc., partly wrought of heavy gold, and also a number of gold trinkets with which the cacique adorned the head and neck of his guest. His companions, too, were looked after no less liberally.

When the admiral returned to the *Niña* that evening his mood was one of joyful excitement, even of solemn exultation. An event which earlier in the day had thrown him into uncontrollable despair, and which seemed to him nothing less than a measureless catastrophe, had been transformed in a single day by the inscrutable decree of God into a marvellous success! Once again a higher Hand had intervened in his life. The flagship lay wrecked on the sandbank, but right in front of it was the land of gold he had despaired of discovering. That morning his inability to take his whole company back with him to Spain on

the *Niña* had still drawn tears from him. He saw now that *without* the shipwreck he could not have spared a sufficient number of men, and provided them with enough of all they needed, for him to risk leaving them behind here so far from their native land even for a year only. "Here it is good to dwell—here let us build tabernacles," the Lord had said to him, and he had been so lacking in faith that only now, when it was so late, did he understand these decisive words! Now he had reached his goal—the goal for which he had so ardently longed!

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE FIRST SETTLEMENT IN THE NEW WORLD

ON the following day (27th December) a mood never experienced before, a spirit of arrogance almost, prevailed on board the *Niña*. In the early morning Columbus had assembled the whole company for divine service and had informed them that he had resolved to found the first Spanish settlement in this land abounding in gold and belonging to the hospitable and amiable cacique, Guacanagari, and then to return to Spain with the rest of the crew to carry to the monarchs the tidings of the successful result of the expedition. He would be back again in a year's time, at the latest, with a larger fleet. It was clear to every one of them that it was impossible for the *Niña*, the smallest of the three ships, to take them all home. Part of the company would therefore have to remain there, engaged as valiant and faithful pioneers serving their majesties in the honourable task of establishing and extending the Spanish rule in this newly discovered world, of preparing everywhere for the friendly reception of the second expedition and withal of amassing as much of the treasures of gold in this territory as could be got by bartering with the articles they still had in plenty. He would leave provisions for them here and as much of other indispensable supplies as would last them for a year; the inexhaustible fertility of the land would keep them from utter want. That very day they would have to begin to build a fortified house, so as to be prepared against all possible danger and also to be able to help the cacique, should the Caribs or the cannibals again make the country unsafe. As soon as the house was built, he would set off, for his mind was no longer at rest. Had the *Pinta* still been with them he would have sent her on to Spain before them and through her captain would have requested fresh ships and crews to be sent out. As it was, however, he could not take the responsibility of exposing his only ship to the inevitable dangers of further voyages of discovery. Who, then, of the men would volunteer to stay behind?

The words had scarcely left his lips when a loud cheer burst out. So many hands flew up that the admiral had to reserve the right of choosing from among the volunteers, and even those who did not wish to remain felt their hearts beating faster at the sudden prospect of being before long once more in their native land. The cacique, too, had come on board, and he gladly approved the admiral's resolve, offering with the greatest willingness to provide both timber and helpers for the work. His only disappointment was that the admiral himself, to whom he had grown attached, was going to leave him. He had already given orders for as much gold to be gathered as to cover his friend completely.

He was just on the eve of taking his departure when an Indian came rowing in, bringing the news that a ship just as large as the admiral's ship, and with the same spreading wings, had been seen in a river at the extreme end of the island! That could only be the *Pinta*. The cacique at once sent off a canoe in that direction, and one of the sailors went in it. All the men who could be spared from the *Niña* were sent on shore to start immediately to fell trees, make the excavations for a commodious cellar and undertake the other preliminary work needed in building a house. The report of the *Pinta*'s reappearance could not shake the admiral's resolve. Doubtless Pinzon, if he had not been wrecked, was cruising somewhere in these waters, but there could no longer be any question of Columbus' being still willing to put the least trust in him; for who could say whether he had any intention at all of submitting himself again to the leadership of the admiral? Three days later another Indian arrived, who was said to have seen the *Pinta* on the day before in a harbour farther east; but on the 1st January the sailor who had been sent to make enquiries returned and reported that he had found no trace of the ship.

This sudden appearance and disappearance of the *Pinta*, however, put the admiral in a state of unrest that grew worse every day. Was Pinzon by any chance on the voyage home? Did he mean to arrive there before the admiral's ship? If he was not to meet at home the reception due to a deserter, he would have to invent some lying fairy-tale to account for his separation from the other ships. The least that could happen would be a vexatious quarrel, the end of which no one could foresee. His old enemies would laugh in their sleeves at Columbus, and he

had had an opportunity of observing the power of a Court cabal at close quarters and with eyesight that mistrust had made keen. And, finally, a deserter had not the least claim to the triumph of bringing to Spain the glorious tidings of the discovery of unknown countries.

Columbus, therefore, was at the building-site from dawn till dusk. Guacanagari took advantage of the presence of his friend to load him with gifts, and he did this in a really dignified and ingenious manner. When the admiral drew near to the village on the 28th, the cacique seemed to notice him in the distance. He did not, however, go to meet him, but disappeared into his house. In place of Guacanagari, a brother of his greeted Columbus, took him to one of the houses that had been cleared for the reception of the Spaniards and requested him to take a seat on a stage like a throne. Then he ordered a servant to announce a visitor, and the cacique hurried in with well-acted surprise! So much had he already learned of European etiquette! He brought with him a large gold jewel which he hung round the shoulders of his guest. Next day he had with him a large mask of heavy gold, for which he asked in exchange a wash-basin and a mug. On the 30th Columbus arrived at the residence just at the time when five other chieftains, vassals of Guacanagari, were visiting him. Each of them wore on his head a circlet of gold like a crown in token of his royal rank, and they entered in as dignified a manner as though they were at the Court in Madrid. On this occasion Guacanagari had come from some distance to meet the admiral, and he conducted him on his arm to the house of the Spaniards. Columbus had again to take a seat on the stage, and the cacique forthwith took from his head the coronet, which he, too, was wearing that day, and put it on the admiral's head, an act of homage which the admiral allowed himself to interpret as a voluntary recognition of the Spanish supremacy, and to this he felt he had to make a worthy response. He took a magnificent chain of coloured stones from his own neck and laid it round the cacique's; then he unbuttoned the cape of the scarlet dress he wore that day and fastened it round the cacique's shoulders, ordered a pair of coloured shoes to be brought and made him put them on, and finally he placed a broad silver ring on his finger. He had chanced to hear from one of the sailors that the cacique had seen a ring like this and had shown a strong desire for it. Guacanagari was overjoyed, and two of the

other chiefs who were present each gave the admiral a sheet of gold. At the farewell feast on the 2nd January the admiral learned from one of the confidants of the cacique that the latter had given orders for as much gold to be brought in ten days as would be required for a sort of statue as large as the admiral himself!

On the other hand, Columbus frequently noticed that he made a State secret of knowing the places where gold was to be found and attached great importance to having the barter carried on through him and not directly by the neighbouring tribes. On the 29th December a nephew of Guacanagari, a bright, intelligent lad, visited the admiral on board the ship and allowed himself to be very freely questioned about the gold mines of the island. Columbus had taken careful note of these statements in order to impart them to the commandant of the citadel. He heard afterwards that the youth had been severely reprimanded by his father for his talkativeness. As a sound economist, Guacanagari wished to keep for himself and his land the prolific source of income represented by the trade in gold.

In a few days the citadel of the Spaniards was finished—a huge, four-square block-house, with a squat tower, in the centre of a courtyard surrounded by a strong wooden fence. The furnishings of the admiral's wrecked ship had been used for fitting out the house, and the ship's guns stuck out menacingly from openings in the roof. During the salvage of the cargo the hull of the *Santa Maria* had to be broken up in order to get at the water-barrels; it still lay out there on the sandbank a mournfully empty wreck. All the stores of provisions, the articles for bartering and the munitions were stowed in the cellar of the house, which was well secured against damp. The bread-stuffs would last for more than a year; some of these would be useful for seed. Numerous barrels of salted meat, dried fish, bacon, lard, oil, ship-biscuits, etc., were piled up against the walls; smaller cases with the indispensable spices, salt, sugar, pepper, etc., and some luxuries for feast-days were kept in a locked closet, the key of which was in the possession of the steward alone; the wine-cellar, too, into which a reassuring number of mighty butts of Spanish wine had been rolled, was under the same guard. The Spaniards had had little difficulty in accustoming themselves to the field-produce which the Indians used as their principal food, and there was a plentiful supply of the various kinds of grain from the homeland for salad and vegetables.

For the occupation of the fort Columbus had chosen thirty-nine men, the majority of whom showed an almost suspicious alacrity for this employment. Love of adventure and greed of gold flickered in their eyes, and they went on with the building of the house as hurriedly as though they could scarcely wait for the moment when the admiral with his annoying punctiliousness and rigorous military discipline would turn his back on them at last, and the sails of the *Niña* disappear beneath the horizon. Among them there were representatives of all the indispensable crafts, a carpenter, a cooper, a caulker to keep the long-boat in good condition, a tailor, a capable master-gunner to serve the cannons, and a physician as well. They were all experienced seamen, who could venture to make extensive voyages of discovery along the coast in the long-boat. Columbus appointed as commander of the fort the chief of the ship's police, Diego de Arena. Pedro Gutierrez, the king's chamberlain, was second in command, and his secretary, Rodrigo de Escovedo, was third officer.

On the 2nd January 1493, everything was so far ready that the admiral could take farewell of the cacique, and at the last meal they had together he warmly recommended his three officers and his whole company to him. After the meal he took the greatly distressed chief with him to witness a final, impressive martial display. He ordered several shots to be fired from one of the guns at the wreck of *Santa Maria*. The shots easily penetrated the ship's hull and set up great splashes in the sea beyond it. Then the men formed ranks for a sham fight with cross-bows and muskets. Guacanagari was intended not only to know but also to fear the power of the Spanish weapons and to learn the value of his allies. Once more Columbus impressed upon him through the interpreters that he should realize he need no longer be afraid of any cannibals in the world. But the thought that his friend from the skies was leaving him kept the good cacique from being solaced by these comforting words.

In the fort itself Columbus addressed words of encouragement and warning to the garrison. He appealed to their loyalty to king and country and to their pride in the honourable mission every one of them had to fulfil. Their first duty was to give unconditional obedience to their three superior officers, disobedience would mean their certain destruction. In the warmest terms he counselled both officers and men to treat the natives



in the most considerate manner; they were subjects of the Spanish throne, just as he and all of them were. Their most important task was to extend and strengthen the friendly relations that already existed with Guacanagari and his subjects, so as to make them ready for baptism. Moreover, they were to collect as much gold as possible, and from the experiences even of the last few days they would not find it difficult, with the help of their store of articles for barter, to gather a whole cask of this precious metal before he returned. The long-boat would provide them with an opportunity of making further trips along the coast, and perhaps they might be able to push on as far as the gold mines themselves. More important even than the finding of gold was the discovery of the spices and drugs that were in use in these islands. Further, on their voyages of reconnaissance they ought to keep their eyes open for the best place in the neighbourhood of a harbour at which a town might be founded. He himself meant now to sail farther along the north coast of this island in order to ascertain how far it extended towards the east; the farther east, the nearer Spain. Finally he gave the commander and the other officers full powers, making them responsible for the company and for the property belonging to the crown, including the house and all its furnishings. The name of the first Spanish settlement was to be "La Navidad," the Birth of Christ or Christmas, in eternal memory of the day on which he had resolved to found it. At the same time he expressed the best wishes for their welfare—though that depended entirely on their own good sense and correct behaviour—and for a happy reunion next year. He concluded by calling for rousing cheers for Spain and the royal house. The steward gave a salute from the cannons of the fort, which was answered in the distance by the *Niña*, and, accompanied by the whole garrison, Columbus walked down to the beach, where his boat lay, through the dense throngs of natives, who were still terrified by the thunder of the guns. He shook hands again with his officers and the cacique, who wept as the admiral stepped into the boat. Then the sailors bent to the oars, and the long-boat sped like an arrow to the *Niña*, which was due to sail on the morrow.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE RIVALS

UNFAVOURABLE weather postponed the departure from La Navidad until the next day. It was not until the morning of the 4th January that a brisk wind carried the *Niña* before it in an easterly direction. The watch-word was—home as soon as possible! There was to be no halt anywhere except to take in drinking-water and provisions, for their stores were now running very low; everything that could at all be spared had been left behind for the colonists in the citadel. Columbus did not propose to do any more, before steering a straight course for home, than make another survey of the extent of the north coast of Haiti, so that he might be able to reach land earlier on his second expedition. He had had to break off his voyage prematurely, as the *Pinta* had disappeared and had not returned. Originally he had intended to remain in the west until April in order to make a closer inspection of this confused mass of innumerable islands. Still he had found the island of Cipango (Japan), for he took Haiti or Hispaniola for this, and what he had seen of Cuba led him to believe that it was the extreme eastern promontory of the Asiatic Continent. But he had not reached the country of the Grand Khan. He had not ventured to search for it any longer, and this filled him with righteous wrath against Martin Pinzon, the man who had made bold to go his own way and had thus in some degree ruined the work of discovery in which the royal fleet was engaged. Even although the Spanish government brought him to book in accordance with martial law, if he really did take the *Pinta* home—that would not make good the damage he had done, and when Columbus now thought of it all, his face burned and he clenched his fists in anger. Certainly he was not returning with empty hands, but would his enemies in Spain not object sarcastically: "What you proposed to reach, Sennor—pardon, Don Colon, has turned out to be sheer fantasy, in spite of all your fine islands! Didn't we always say that? Aren't you bringing back with you again the letters you had

for the Grand Khan, because the address could not be found? And there may well be a difference of opinion as to whether you have, on the whole, my Lord High Admiral and viceroy! carried out their majesties' commission, and whether you have earned the honours conferred on you—honours, which, in our humble opinion, are excessively high!" No one yet imagined, least of all Columbus himself, that on this first voyage immeasurably more had been attained than had been set down in the admiral's agreement with the Spanish government, and that the first tip of a completely new world had been grasped! He believed he had pushed on the east coast of Asia. But how could he prove that? For of all the wonders which Marco Polo had seen and Toscanelli had promised, the lands he had trodden possessed but one—wealth of gold. But instead of palaces with golden roofs, elephants with gilded trunks and people clothed in magnificent silken garments, he had only found mean cabins, gay-coloured parrots and naked barbarians! His real goal had not been reached owing to the breaking-up of his fleet. Would a second voyage be at all possible? The favour of princes was as fickle as a will-o'-the-wisp. Had not Bartolomeu Diaz been completely cold-shouldered by the ungrateful King of Portugal, after he had reached the south point of Africa six years ago, instead of being allowed after his great triumph to sail to India by the route he had discovered?

Even in Palos, Columbus had not always agreed with the instructions of the brothers Pinzon. Certainly they were just as eager as he was simply to get on with the work. But their remissness in equipping the ships for a voyage that was quite incalculable had caused him great anxiety. He had to keep his eyes shut, for, after all, he was dependent on their help; he had even borrowed money from Martin Pinzon to enable him to meet his share in the expenses of the expedition. In due course, too, the *Pinta* had sustained serious damage when he had only come as far as the Canary Islands. Then on the voyage there were the differences that grew ever more bitter with regard to the course that was to be followed, Pinzon's headstrong assumption of knowing everything better than Columbus, his scarcely concealed, continual readiness to go off by himself, and the senseless rivalry of the two caravels merely to win the queen's prize for the island first sighted! And the boastful triumph of Pinzon, when land first appeared in the direction he had

taken almost in defiance of Columbus! Their proper goal, which lay straight on in the west had thus simply been missed! Columbus should have made clear to him then to whom the leadership of the squadron was entrusted. But he could not venture to irritate him any further. If an open breach had been the result, and the three brothers had made common cause against him, what would have happened then? Vicente Pinzon, the captain of the *Niña*, was not such a stubborn fellow as Martin, he was less overbearing and less fond of power, not so hot-tempered or churlish; but he was also more reserved and close, one never knew how to deal with him. When it came to the pinch, could he be trusted? But Martin Pinzon was obsessed with the ambitious desire to take the lead himself, for the purpose of using the squadron to advance his own personal aims. The likelihood was that he had taken part in the voyage simply to further his own schemes under the protection of Columbus. There was very little to be got from the islands first discovered; he had soon found out that; greed sharpened his vision. Why did the admiral cruise about here to no purpose? What had a merchant to do with beautiful trees and wretched savages? These people did not even bring out their women—on this point the admiral, that dry stick and bigot, did not know how to take a joke! One did not deal in such a finical and ridiculously sentimental fashion with these tawny beauties! And these were to be the new fellow-citizens of the kingdom! The Spaniards would think twice about this nice lot, until it was proved that they were human beings at all! Here was the slogan—out with the gold and no delay about it! And not for a crusade to Jerusalem, a thing long out of fashion! As for that Italian—he had no go, no business-sense! If only the pitiable visionary had stayed at home!

In this blustering manner Pinzon had often raved out loud in front of his crew, and hints of this had come to the admiral's ears. The sailors whispered among themselves: How was this going to end? If the admiral took any steps to put an end to it, he was simply asking for open rebellion; in that event he could not have the least confidence in his own crew. It would be child's play for daring rascals like them, if they were well paid, to get him and the whole troublesome crowd of supervising officials out of the way somewhere here on the coast. So he had to let the fire smoulder, until finally Martin Pinzon had so

far won over the crew of the *Pinta* with liberal promises, that he dared to take the decisive step: on the 21st November he had vanished never to be seen again. Where could he possibly be now?

To this question the 6th January 1493 brought a surprising answer. The *Niña* had already well behind her a cape, named by Columbus "Monte Christi," which stood out prominently from the north coast of Haiti, when the sailor at the mast-head suddenly shouted: "Ship ahoy!" It could only be the *Pinta*. And, as a matter of fact, it drew slowly near. Pinzon had certainly learned from Indians that the *Santa Maria* had been stranded at La Navidad, and that part of the crew had remained behind there. He was therefore not surprised to see the admiral's flag at the mast of the *Niña*, and no doubt merely wondered how far his brother Vicente now had the ship and crew still in his power, in case the admiral somehow took umbrage at his trip that had lasted more than six weeks and drew from it certain disciplinary conclusions. A boat took him to the *Niña*. Then he stood face to face with his admiral.

The interview did not last long. Affecting the assurance and the frank, straightforward honesty, on which everything now depended, Pinzon explained to Columbus that his separation from the squadron had been merely due to the sport of chance and of a higher power. It was evident, he said, that he had misunderstood an order of the admiral's, taken a wrong course, had not been able to see the *Santa Maria's* signals and had been driven so far by the storm which suddenly arose that he had no longer been able to find his way about and had gone hopelessly astray. Since then he had sailed in every possible direction, mainly to find the admiral's ship again. For that very reason he had been cruising about here on the north coast of Hispaniola. The gold, too, that he had managed to secure, did not amount to very much. But for all that he had ferreted out all sorts of things that the admiral might find useful. Hispaniola was not the real source of the gold; but south of Cuba there was an island called Namaye (Jamaica), where gold lay about in lumps as large as hens' eggs. From there one could in ten days reach with a canoe a continent where people wore clothes—it was too bad he had not been able to let the admiral know this before! But there was still time—in a few days they could be there.

Columbus listened to this babble patiently and in silence,

but he kept his glance fixed on Pinzon's furtive, unsteady eyes, and his countenance was so stern, and the furrows in his brow so menacing, that the words gradually died on the lips of the man who was defending himself with such forced candour. Then he told him straight to his face that what he was saying was nothing but sheer subterfuge and lies! But, in order to keep his self-control after all this vexation, he declined all further discussion—Satan had had his finger in the pie during the whole voyage, but he was not to be completely victorious.

When these words were hurled passionately at him, Pinzon became ashy pale, but he attempted to force an ironical smile. With a curt farewell he returned to his ship, after previously greeting his two brothers and having a private conversation with them for a few minutes.

It had not been easy for the admiral to hold himself in; he would have preferred to seize the hypocrite by the throat, for it was his disloyalty alone that had frustrated the main object of the voyage. Did he not still laugh sneeringly when he told him of the continent in the west that lay so near? It was too late now to search for it, and the *Pinta* would mean risk for him rather than help. Only one thing remained: to get back as quickly as possible in order to shake off once and for all the whole band of Pinzons and their set and to make a clean sweep of them.

The private information he received about Pinzon during the next few days only confirmed him in this resolve. One of the Indians from San Salvador who had been stowed on board the *Pinta* had duped the captain with the story of the island of Babeque teeming with gold. This news brought Pinzon's determination to a head. He found the island, too, but no gold. The natives there referred him to Hispaniola, the coast of which he reached eight days after Columbus. In the middle of December he had lain at anchor about fifteen leagues from La Navidad. The report which Guacanagari's people brought had, therefore, been quite correct. Pinzon had carried on coercive bartering on the coast of Haiti; the Indians gave lumps of gold as large as two fingers or even as large as a hand for a piece of leather strap. For these he bartered articles that belonged to the crown, but he preferred to pay nothing at all. He shared the gold with the crew, giving half to them and keeping half for himself. In a

harbour, which both ships now reached on the 10th January, Pinzon had stayed for sixteen days to collect gold. During that time numberless borer-worms had so eaten into the timber of his ship that it was scarcely seaworthy any longer. When he heard that the admiral also was lying near this coast he had made up his mind to sail to meet him, demanding from his men, however, that they should swear he had only stayed six days in that harbour! But, worst of all, he had forcibly carried off four Indians and two young women. And that had happened on this coast, where the cacique had given such a friendly reception to the admiral and his men, where a part of the crew had remained behind, and where, for that reason, the natives could not be treated too considerably! The news of this act of violence would necessarily spread through the whole island in a short time; confidence in the Spaniards would thereby be shattered, the first settlement imperilled, and no one could tell what the consequences might be. Columbus, indeed, immediately ordered the Indians to be provided with clothes and put ashore again, and Pinzon, gnashing his teeth, had perforce to obey. But this did not finally dispose of the misdeed, as was to be seen only too soon.

When a squad of sailors went on shore on the 13th January to fetch water, they were met by armed Indians, horribly ugly fellows, whose faces were blackened with charcoal. Their long hair was tied in knots and decked with parrots' feathers. The interpreter was the first to succeed in coming to an understanding with them. The sailors bought two bows from them and a number of arrows, which were almost a yard long and were furnished with sharp tips. Would one of them not be willing to come with them on board the ship? One of them was ready to do this and he was taken to the admiral. Here, then, was evidently one of the dreaded Caribs, and Columbus carefully scrutinized this specimen of the man-eaters. But he denied that he was one of the cannibals, they lived farther east. There gold was to be found as big as the "castle" of the ship. Columbus ordered him to be regaled with ships' biscuits and honey and loaded with presents of beads and red and green cloth. If he brought him gold he would receive a great deal more. Then the sailors took their guest ashore.

When they arrived at the beach, a horde of about fifty of these charcoal-blackened demons waited in ambush for them behind the trees, every one of them armed with bow and arrow

and a heavy wooden cudgel. The Indian who was returning shouted to them to lay down their arms and come near, and some of them approached reluctantly. But while the Spaniards were still dealing with them about the purchase of bows, the savages suddenly ran back to their weapons and then attacked the strangers. They had even brought cords with them to bind their prisoners. Fortunately the sailors were on the alert, and when one Indian was wounded by a shot and another by the cut of a sabre, the others threw away their weapons and took to flight.

This first conflict with the aborigines was extremely annoying to the admiral, but after he had inspected one of these rascals, he scarcely expected anything better from them. This fresh mishap had occurred and could not be remedied, but perhaps it might even have good results: if the crew of the long-boat from La Navidad went on shore here at any time, the savages had had their lesson. Pinzon was not excused by this, for he had seized quite inoffensive Indians, and not these warlike and dangerous red-skins. Columbus himself now wanted to take one of them with him to Spain.

When he sent a boat to the land next day for this purpose the whole beach swarmed with Indians. The visitor of the day before hurried to meet the sailors, and on behalf of a king who was following him he presented them with pearls as a token of friendship. The king, with three of his suite, entered the boat and came on board the ship, where they were entertained and loaded with gifts in the usual way. They departed greatly delighted. As the chief took his leave he promised to bring a mask of gold on the morrow. He did not come himself the next day, but sent some of his people with a gold coronet. Four of them paid a visit to the ship; they were young, intelligent lads and were well informed about the island and its neighbourhood. They came very opportunely for the admiral, and they were easily prevailed upon to make the voyage to Spain with him.

Until January of 1493 Columbus never wrote *one* harsh word about Pinzon and his brothers; even Martin's withdrawal on the 21st November he merely notes as an unfortunate matter of fact. Not until their meeting again on the 6th January does his displeasure seem to have increased to such a degree that from that time onwards he often, in angry words, blames their insubordination, disloyalty, ingratitude and greed for everything that



did not satisfy him in the result of his voyage. He accuses them bluntly of intending not merely to secure for themselves the chief share of the booty of gold, but to dispute his claim to the glory of accomplishing his great undertaking. There were sufficient reasons for this suspicion, and it was only confirmed by the final outcome of this contest between two equally ambitious rivals. Pinzon's eagerness to be always leading had certainly cooled now, for the *Pinta* was in such a bad condition that it slowed down the rate of progress on the return voyage. But the two ships did not return to Spain together. When they were abreast of the Azores they were overtaken by a terrible storm, and for days they were at the mercy of the waves. The vessels were kept in touch by light-signals, but suddenly the *Pinta* disappeared once more! Pinzon was daring and shrewd enough to stake all on this last card. If it was to be a matter of life and death then let him save himself who can! He was really the first to reach the Spanish coast north of Portugal, and he sent at once an express messenger from the harbour of Bayona to the royal Court to report his arrival. But it was known there already that Columbus had landed at Lisbon, and Pinzon's report was answered by the brusque order to make his appearance at Court in the admiral's suite! He felt this command like a blow with a club. Columbus, then, had forestalled him after all, and he had light-heartedly deprived himself of his friendship and even of his forbearance. It was clear what fate awaited him now. He obeyed the royal command and hurried to Palos—perhaps if he got there first justice would be tempered by mercy. But when he reached the bar of Saltes he saw the *Niña* lying there with the admiral's flag at her mast-head. He had arrived only a few hours too late! He did not venture to show himself at first, for his friends met him with the news that Columbus would arrest him and have him carried off to Barcelona as a deserter. Pinzon therefore lay hidden in a house near Moguer, and his anger and despair at his bad fortune made him ill; the anxiety and wear and tear of the storm had broken down his physical powers as well. He was taken to the adjacent cloister of La Rábida, where he died after a few days.

## CHAPTER XXV

### STORM ON THE OCEAN

COLUMBUS had left the coast of Haiti on the 16th January 1493. The condition of the ships and the shortage of provisions had compelled him to hurry. Besides, his crew grumbled and urged him to take advantage of the wind, which was favourable for the return voyage. Soon both ships were again on the high sea, and the experiences of the outward voyage were repeated. The weather, too, seemed inclined to be wonderfully propitious to them. But when the Sargossa Sea had been successfully navigated and the coastline of Europe and Africa drew near, the sea grew rougher from day to day, and on the 14th February the ships were caught in a terrible storm. The waves rolling in from both sides took them in their clutches, and foaming over the decks swept everything away. No sail could stand the fury of the hurricane, and the most the steersmen could do was to offer the least possible surface to the attack of wind and wave and let themselves be driven helplessly through a night of cloud and rain lit up only by flashes of lightning. Hardened seamen wept and cried, wildly mingling prayers and curses, bewailing the parents, wives and children they were never to see again; they swore at the admiral, whom they had not forced to return in good time, or they lay on their bunks in their pitch-dark quarters beneath deck, groaning in utter despair. The few Indians on board had curled themselves up in a corner and gave no sign of life. Anyone who tried to move a single step had to go on all fours, and those whose duty it was to go on deck in this chaos of darkness and lightning, torrential downpour and roaring hurricane, came tumbling precipitately down again, terrified and dripping with water. The water swirled about their feet, and everyone was wet to the skin. All the sails were furled to the last handsbreadth, ropes were torn away, and everyone waited for the moment when the first mast would snap with a sharp crack and sail and rigging would be swept overboard. Then that would be the end. Had it come to that? One of the deck hatches must have opened—a torrent

was sweeping down the companion ladder—a dim light was seen—it was the admiral in his dark braided cloak, feeling his way down the slippery steps with a lantern, after he had fastened down the hatch, and he was coming staggering towards them. He was met with distorted faces, threatening looks and clenched fists. He began to speak, but not a word could be heard for the noise of the waves and the rolling of the thunder. Then he shouted words of encouragement into their ears: Deliverance would come only from God and the saints. “Your lives are in the hands of Almighty God! Turn your hearts to Him and cry to Heaven for help! Vow a pilgrimage to Santa Maria de Guadalupe and a candle of five pounds—the man on whom the lot falls is bound by solemn oath to do this! Let each of us draw lots. Fetch me a handful of beans from the caboose!” The cook set off to do this and came back with a wooden goblet full of beans. “Right!—Now I shall mark one of those beans with a cross.—Here, boy, shake the goblet!—And now each one of us in turn!” The ship’s boy held the goblet first to the admiral; he put in his hand—and drew out the bean marked with a cross! “Once more—for a second pilgrimage! To Santa Maria of Loretto, where our Lady wrought countless miracles and still does so today!” This time the lot fell on one of the sailors. “I shall pay the expenses of the pilgrimage. But you must carry it out—you have vowed to do it! And now a third, a night-vigil at Santa Clara in Moguer and a holy mass—draw lots once again—draw!”

For the second time the lot fell on the admiral! And this singular happening affected everyone like a visible sign from on high. “We shall all make a pilgrimage!” some of them now cried. “At the first land we reach—there will be a church of the Mother of God somewhere near—we shall go in procession barefoot, wearing only a shirt, even if the storm grows still worse than it is now! Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!” And each of them made a vow on his own account, if only he escaped with bare life.

These good resolutions restored their spirits a little, and Columbus climbed up again to the poop. White sheets of parchment lay ready on his work-table, and gripping the top of it firmly with his left hand, he began to write in the dim, flickering light of the lantern. If God did not consider him worthy of a miracle, it would mean certain death for all. Then the ships would go down with every soul on board, and the news of their successful voyage

and of all their discoveries would die away unheard, like a cry for help here on the raging ocean. Every minute might be his last—perhaps he had still sufficient time to write a word that would reach some one, if Heaven had not quite forsaken him. Then surely the world would learn, and his friends and foes would learn, what he and his men had accomplished for the fatherland, and if, after all, his two sons were to be orphaned, the kingdom of Castile would at least be under some obligation to them. His quill hurried across the parchment; in the midst of the uproar of the elements he set down in brief sentences his account of the voyage and its most important events, signed the last page with the two words: "The admiral," rolled up the parchments, wrapped them in a waxed cloth, sealed every crack with liquid wax which he melted at the lantern above his head, and ordered the steersman who lay in a corner near him, his head buried in his hands, to bring him one of the strongest of the small casks he could find. In this he packed the document safely, closed the bung-hole with meticulous care and summoned two sailors who had remained on the poop. They were to help him to throw the cask overboard and as far out as possible. With the usual superstition of seamen they looked on this as a final magic charm meant to exorcize the rage of the tempest. They climbed the rigging, held the admiral in their arms as he stood between them like a magician and flung the cask overboard like a ball. Perhaps it would be swept ashore somewhere; in a marginal note the finder was promised a rich reward if he forwarded the document to the king. Exhausted by this excessive strain on his mental energy, Columbus then threw himself on his bed and lay for a long while without stirring; his lips alone trembled as he whispered disjointed words of prayer. But there was peace in his heart. He had come to an agreement with life.

In the evening the storm seemed to abate a little, and the sky cleared in the west. The waves still rose to an immense height and tossed the badly ballasted ship about like a nut-shell. The *Pinta* had vanished completely. But still it was possible to see one's hands again; every glimmer of light was like a deliverance, and one by one the men began to sigh with relief and to take hope again. It was possible now to hoist a sail without risk. Columbus took the helm himself and remained at his post for three days and nights without a break, with the result that he was almost paralysed with the cold and the excessive fatigue.

In the early morning of the 15th land was sighted in the north-east. What could it be? Madeira, the pilot thought; another believed it to be the cliffs of Cintra near Lisbon. Columbus was convinced that there lay before him one of the Azore islands, which belonged to Portugal. The proximity of land brought with it fresh danger, for the storm was still raging, although not so furiously as the day before. There could be no thought of landing, for the vessel could not approach any part of this rock-bound coast and had to remain on the high sea. Two days passed in this way. On the evening of the 17th Columbus tried to cast anchor; but the anchor had scarcely taken hold when the surf broke the rope. For another night the admiral had to tack hither and thither, until at last on the morning of the 18th he thought he could find a safe anchorage in a bight and sent the long-boat on shore. His calculation proved to be correct: the island was Santa Maria, one of the Azores.

Salvation, security, help, at last, in the hour of supreme need, for the last barrel of ships' biscuits had been opened and wind and waves had utterly exhausted all of them. But the sailors stepped aside with all veneration when Columbus strode past them, and they nudged one another lightly with their elbows. Even the most rancorous critic had to admit that the admiral was a man elect of God.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE PORTUGUESE TRAP

THREE men from the *Niña* had remained on shore in order to purchase more provisions than could be obtained in the vicinity of the long-boat. The inhabitants on the coast had been watching the strange ship for two days with anxious suspense and had given it up for lost. They had never before experienced storms there, such as they had had that winter, and it was an absolute miracle that this hulk that was scarcely seaworthy had been able to last out the hurricane of the past days. And these Spaniards had come from India and had discovered unknown lands? India? Had not that belonged for a long time now to the King of Portugal? The news spread like wildfire through the whole island.

In the evening three persons appeared on the shore and shouted: "Come across!" The admiral sent the long-boat on shore. The strangers brought new bread, fowls and all sorts of dainties, which the governor, Juan de Castañeda, sent to the admiral with his best wishes. He would wait on him in person early next morning, since he was an old acquaintance of the admiral's, and would bring him more provisions. He had detained the three Spaniards on land in order to get from them overnight a full account of their wonderful adventures. Columbus' heart beat high with thankful gladness; he treated the governor's messengers with the utmost respect, although he was quite unable to recall his acquaintanceship, and he invited them to stay for the night, which they also did quite freely.

The crew, in fulfilment of their vow, were to go next morning on pilgrimage to the nearest church of St. Mary. Not far from the anchorage, behind an adjacent ridge of cliffs, there was situated, as Columbus learned from the governor's messengers, a small hermitage dedicated to the Mother of God. So in the early morning half the crew set off in the long-boat, and soon a procession of men in white shirts, with church banners waving, moved off from the beach in the direction of the hermitage and

disappeared behind the cliffs. Columbus himself wanted to rest for a while in order to join the other half of the crew afterwards. And it was fortunate for him that he did this!

At eleven o'clock the first party had not yet returned. From the ship no one had been seen coming back to the beach. The long-boat lay somewhere on the shore behind the rocks and was not in sight. What could be the meaning of this? Minute by minute the admiral grew more restless. As the promised visit of the governor was overdue, Columbus ordered the anchor to be weighed, and he sailed a short distance along the coast. All at once he saw his long-boat coming out from among the rocks on the shore. But these were surely not his men on board! Indeed, the boat flew the flag of Portugal! They were Portuguese soldiers, armed to the teeth! And the beach behind the rocks also swarmed with armed men, both on foot and on horseback. Was he then in an enemy's country? Was there war between Portugal and Spain?

The long-boat came within hail of the ship. One of the men on board, wearing a uniform lavishly adorned with gold-braid rose up and shouted across through a speaking-trumpet: "The governor of Santa Maria wishes to speak to the admiral, but he desires an assurance of personal safety for himself and for his people."

Columbus answered at once: "So far as I am concerned there is no reason for my denying the governor a personal safe-conduct. But why is there none of my men on board my long-boat? Has any one dared, by any chance, to detain them by force? Every Portuguese is as safe throughout the whole of Spain as he is at home in Lisbon! Anyone who lays hands on my men will rue it bitterly. If the governor will come on board I shall show him my credentials, signed by both their majesties with their own hand, as Admiral of the Ocean and viceroy of India, which now belongs to the Spanish Crown. I am on my return voyage to Castile, and no power on earth will hinder me from continuing it. I have still enough men on board for this purpose. My people are in the service of the rulers of Spain, who know how to avenge any insult."

There was silence on the long-boat for a moment. Columbus was firmly resolved to hold the governor as hostage for his men, if he ventured to come on board. But the Portuguese had evidently become suspicious. The oars remained motionless, and he cried through his trumpet: "The governor and his soldiers do not

know of any king or queen of Spain here. This is Portugal and the realm of its king, John II, and if the admiral does not know that he will soon find it out."

Columbus replied with some heat: "So far as I am aware there is not a state of war between Portugal and Spain. The admiral must insist on not being spoken to in this tone."

The other was not satisfied yet. "The governor of Santa Maria acts on behalf of his king and lord. He orders the admiral to remain in the nearest harbour. All further details will be arranged after that."

Columbus now lost patience; he was on the point of leaving the answer to his master-gunner, but he thought better of it before it was too late, and broke off the interview, declaring: "The admiral will neither land nor leave his ship until he has slain the whole population of Santa Maria and has a hundred Portuguese prisoners on board." On that he ordered his men, who had flocked round him and had been present during this surprising conversation, to return to the place where he had anchored before. As the storm had not subsided yet, he could not do anything else for the present.

Although his words had no uncertain sound, he was in reality badly upset by the hostile attitude of the Portuguese authorities. For nearly all his best men were among the crew whom the Portuguese had taken into custody. He had barely three men who were to any extent familiar with the fairway, and he was quite at a loss to know how he was to reach Palos with so little assistance. He himself was completely at the end of his tether. It was certainly an unpleasant surprise for Portugal to know that he had reached India and had taken possession of it for Spain. But would King John venture so far as to dispute this conquest with Spain? Even on the outward voyage the Portuguese had lain in wait for their vessels off the Canary Islands. Without doubt that had been done under just as express orders of the king as the present capture of the sailors. The admiral might threaten to take drastic measures, but to carry them out was far beyond his power. Plainly preparations had long been made here in the event of anything serious happening.

The *Niña* was not to be allowed to remain where she was lying. Quite suddenly during the night she began to drift. Under cover of the darkness the governor's men had cut the anchor-ropes without the watch noticing anything amiss. It was evidently



intended that the ship should go aground somewhere, for the storm had not yet entirely abated. Columbus attempted to make for St. Michael, the nearest island; he cruised hither and thither the whole day, but saw no sign of land. For that reason he returned in the evening to his former anchorage.

No sooner had he arrived than he heard someone shout from a projecting cliff that he was not to sail any farther, but to stay where he was. And immediately after that the long-boat approached the *Niña* again. This time it was manned by five sailors, two priests and a notary, and did not by any means produce such a martial impression. The three officials came on board. Columbus treated them with punctilious courtesy, and as it was already dusk he invited them to remain on board overnight. On the following morning they merely asked to see the royal credentials and the letters of safe-conduct. His excellency the governor had evidently come to the conclusion that he had been rather premature and that the conflict might prove to have serious consequences for him. Columbus deemed it very important to make it possible for him to beat an honourable retreat. He laid before the envoys all the papers they wished to see. They declared they were profoundly satisfied, murmured something about unfortunate misunderstandings and went ashore again at once. Not long after that the long-boat made its appearance again with the whole of the company that had been arrested. Their jailer had had to provide them with rugs and old garments, for the poor fellows had been nearly frozen with the cold.

The admiral learned from them how everything had happened. They had been allowed to reach the hermitage without hindrance, and they had just kneeled down to pray when they were suddenly surrounded by a band of armed men under the personal leadership of the governor and taken to the nearest place of confinement, where they received pretty scurvy and rough treatment. They owed their release to the fact that the governor could not capture at the same time the *whole* crew and the admiral with them. Had the latter fallen into his hands they would never have been set free again! So ran the order of the king of Portugal, his men assured him! It was only by a happy chance that the mouse had not entered the trap!

The *Niña* was at last able to continue her voyage on the 25th February, after the necessary ballast had been taken on board and the water-casks filled. But the troubles were not at an end

yet. The nearer they got to Spain the more furious grew the turmoil of the elements. They were so near their goal, and yet there was no possibility of reaching it! On the 5th March a cyclone tore all the sails to tatters. Once more a pilgrimage was vowed, and again the lot fell on the admiral. The *Niña* had been driven so far north that Columbus, despite his experience of Portuguese hospitality at Santa Maria, was glad to take refuge in the harbour of Cintra on the coast of Portugal.

Once again on Portuguese soil, he now went fearlessly into the lion's den. He sailed some distance up the Tagus and at Rastelo he requested permission from the king of Portugal to proceed to Lisbon for the purpose of re-victualling his ship. He was just returning, he said, from India, from Cipango, and not from anywhere near Guinea; he had not infringed any of the Portuguese prerogatives, and he did not wish to run the risk of being pounced upon in some lonely harbour by bandits, who might scent golden treasure in his little ship. This step on the part of the admiral was as shrewd as it was daring. While it might, perhaps, have been possible to effect his disappearance along with his entire crew and his ship on the isolated Azores, so as to forestall any claim that Spain might make to India, that was out of the question here on the mainland. Soon everyone knew of the return of the three ships, which had sailed westwards seven months before with the intention of reaching the east coast of Asia. There was a rush of inquisitive people from every quarter to witness the miracle and to congratulate the seamen on their escape from the witches' cauldron of the ocean—in that ridiculous nut-shell, too, which was hardly worth re-caulking!

The day after his arrival in Rastelo, Columbus received a second official visit. The chief officer of the large man-of-war which lay at anchor there, cleared for action, came on board. This time it was really a personal acquaintance of the admiral's and was no less than Bartolomeu Diaz the famous navigator, whom Columbus had met five years before. But on the present occasion Diaz came on an official mission and conveyed to the admiral a request to accompany him in his long-boat and give an account of himself to the commandant of the district and the commander of the warship. Columbus regretted he had to decline to do this. He was an admiral of the king of Spain, and did not need to give an account of himself to anyone. Then would he allow himself to be represented by his chief officer? Diaz asked. "That is one

and the same thing," Columbus firmly replied, "neither I nor any of my men will leave the ship to go on board a foreign long-boat." Would he not, then, be willing to show his credentials? "With pleasure!" answered Columbus, putting his papers before him. Diaz thanked him, took his leave and sailed across to the man-of-war. Suddenly everything became very lively there. Once more the long-boat came alongside. This time the captain of the warship, Don Alonzo de Acuña, appeared in person accompanied by his whole ships' band. He greeted the admiral enthusiastically, congratulating him on his voyage, the significance of which he had already grasped, and ordered such a resounding flourish of welcome to be given with drums, fifes and trumpets that the timbers of the *Niña* trembled.

For three days the *Niña* was besieged by visitors from Rastelo, Lisbon and the whole surrounding country, who were amazed above all at the brown creatures, the like of whom they had never seen before. On the 8th March a Court cavalier brought the king's reply—an invitation to his summer residence at Valparaiso, and in addition an order to all officials to supply the admiral, his crew and his ship with all they might need without asking payment. The invitation was the less welcome to Columbus since the summer residence was nine hours' journey from Lisbon. But the weather was still too bad to allow the *Niña* to put to sea again, and any hesitation on his part might awaken fresh suspicion. First of all he sailed to Lisbon, and from there an express messenger was sent to Seville with a note for the royal consorts, and two letters already written on the 15th February, which gave full details of his voyage. These letters were addressed to his two supporters, the State Treasurer, Raphael Sanchez, and the finance Minister, Santangel. Then he set out along with his pilot for Valparaiso, which he did not reach until the evening of the 9th March, owing to the rainy weather and bottomless roads. The king received him with unusual marks of distinction, making his guest sit in his presence—a right to which only persons of princely rank were entitled—and plying him incessantly and persistently with the most searching questions regarding his experiences and his discoveries. He thought it very remarkable that the islanders whom Columbus had brought home with him should be brown, and not black, like the natives of his colony of Guinea. He had to remain two days with the king, and on the third day he had to wait on the queen, who was staying at the cloister of St. Anthony

near Villa Franca. He found himself as overwhelmed with honours as though he had been in Seville at the Court of the monarch who had given him his commission, and a certain thorny question which visibly disturbed the king was also happily disposed of. The king was quite enchanted with the admiral's daring spirit, with the successful accomplishment of his voyage and with all his new discoveries. Incidentally he remarked that Columbus could scarcely have done him a greater service, for—all these countries belonged to Portugal! That was provided for, he said, in a compact made between his government and Spain in the year 1479. Columbus answered modestly that he did not know about this compact and had only carried out his king's commission to go straight across the ocean to India and rigorously avoid all Portuguese territory. The king smiled, saying that there would surely be no difficulty in seeing eye to eye on this question; no umpire was needed between two friendly States. He even invited the admiral to travel to Spain overland, offering him as many carriages and horses as he required for that purpose, but he quite understood that Columbus could not leave his ship and would want to land at the place from which he set out.

On the evening of the 12th March Columbus was again with his men, and the *Niña* weighed anchor for the last time on the following morning. Two days later at dawn she reached the bar of Saltes gaily decorated with flags, and with a flowing tide the Admiral of the Ocean sailed about midday into the harbour of Palos which he had left on the 5th August 1492.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE CONQUERING HERO

THE whole population of Palos ran to the harbour when the cry rang through the streets: "The *Niña* is back again!" and when the *Pinta* also appeared later, the rejoicing knew no bounds. The whole company that had embarked on this fool-hardy enterprise had long since been given up as lost. And now the most of them were home again, while the rest were safe on solid, if distant, ground; and none of them had died, or been drowned or had even been ill. On the contrary, the foreign climate had agreed with them splendidly, and their experiences eclipsed all the fairy-tales and sailor stories that mothers told their children. What they had thought incredible was there before their own eyes—actual human beings with brown skins and tattooed faces, clad only with a scanty apron, though in their own country they ran about completely naked. There, too, were their bows, their arrows, hammocks from their cabins and the wooden implements they used. And gay-coloured parrots and plants never seen before and a thousand other wonderful things; and gold, real gold, that could be got over yonder for a bit of broken earthenware. And one sailor after the other would wink to his wife, warning her to hold her tongue, for no one was to know how heavy his kit was.

A wave of astonishment swept over the whole of Spain, and the long journey from Palos by Seville and Cordova to Barcelona, whither the king had summoned Columbus, was an unbroken succession of bell-ringing, shouts of acclamation, thanksgiving services and ceremonial receptions. On the country roads the peasants were on the watch day and night to catch a glimpse of the wild men, the waggons and horses with mysterious loads, the screeching birds and the tall admiral with his serious face—the whole world had suddenly become so large, so immeasurably large, that it made one dizzy. In the towns where the caravan stayed over night there was a greater stir and noise than at the largest yearly fair. The church had never been so packed as it was when Columbus attended early morning mass, and all who

could be called musicians at all were mustered by the mayor and had to accompany the procession to the next town with kettle-drums and trumpets. And the holy hermanadad, that very worshipful police corps, had no time to take their clothes off at all, for a growing crowd of beggars joined the procession, and whenever a halt was made at some lonely spot in the open country a rabble that was shy of the light flocked up scenting booty.

Outside the city of Barcelona, which Columbus reached in the middle of April, the procession developed into a well-planned, gorgeous display. The city had sent a squad of armed men along with a band of drums and fifes to meet the procession while it was still some miles distant. A vast number of people had joined them. Those on horseback had to trot right and left across the fields in order to pass the pedestrians. Noblemen and courtiers rushed on at a furious pace, anxious to be first to greet the admiral, proud to press his hand however hurriedly. The soldiers, as soon as they reached the procession, formed its vanguard, in order to keep the streets clear with their halberds. The band with its deafening noise came after them. Behind these strode six Indians. Three of them had had to remain in Palos still suffering from the fatigue of the last weeks, and one of them had died at sea. These haughty figures made a tremendous impression, with their long, bluish-black hair decorated with parrots' feathers, their garishly painted faces and bodies, their necklaces, bracelets and anklets of gold and the ornaments in their ears and noses. They were actually beings from another world, about whom the creation story and the Church Fathers gave no account. They were followed by a long train of bearers on foot and on horseback who carried specimens of the riches of this newly discovered world—gold in nuggets and large lumps, golden coronets of primitive workmanship and grotesque masks with golden eyes, noses and protruding tongues; whole armfuls of spears and javelins and the domestic utensils and fishing implements of these strange tribes; living parrots and stuffed birds with the most brilliant plumage; huge bales of cotton, both raw and spun; dried twigs of unknown plants, waggon-loads of new kinds of timber, and locked trunks and chests filled with wonderful things from this land of India, which the prophetic vision of the discoverer had seen across half the terrestrial globe. Then came Columbus himself on horseback with his two sons, whom he had brought from Cordova, on his right and left—

Diego already a handsome youth with a self-conscious manner, and Fernando still a child of five. After him came some of his pilots and officers and a long cavalcade of noblemen and court officials, truly a princely escort. Another troop of armed men brought up the rear.

Thus Columbus entered Barcelona. With a serious countenance, but with eyes flashing with pride and happiness, he received the tumultuous homage shouted jubilantly from the crowds of people in street after street, or waved down to him from festooned palaces and houses and even from roofs, until he reached the gateway of the royal residence.

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella received him in a large salon with wide-opened doors, and a reverential silence fell on the rustling throng of lords and ladies of the Court in their gorgeous robes as the admiral in his sombre court dress approached the royal dais with his Indians. All of them present, whether they were the friends or still the enemies of this upstart, felt that it was a moment of supreme significance in the history of the world. The royal pair rose as he entered, and as he bent to kiss their hands they restrained him from doing this and led him to a chair beneath the baldachin. There he had to sit—an absolutely unprecedented honour—and give his report. And although the joy of the moment almost stunned him and took away his voice, he began his story. He really did not come with empty hands; he brought the Spanish monarchs dominion over a realm of islands, which, so far as could be estimated, must be larger than the kingdom of Ferdinand and Isabella; he gave them possession of a boundless wealth of pure gold and of manifold valuable products; he made them rulers over millions of human beings, whose existence no one had suspected, and whose conversion to Christianity would bring them the reward of temporal and eternal happiness. Here stood some of these new people, almost in their primeval, paradisaical state, looking round with wide-open, timid gaze on this heaven into which the winged ships of the strangers had brought them. Here was gold and an immense quantity of specimens of the treasures of India, where, although he had not trodden the kingdom of the Grand Khan, he had discovered many, many hundred leagues of utterly unknown lands and would discover still more of them. And, carried away by his joy and enthusiasm, he described with shining eyes the wonderful beauty of these coasts that had never been seen before, and with

a proud consciousness of the greatness of his deed he did not fail to lay stress on the importance of what he had accomplished and would still accomplish for Spain and its king and queen. "The Lord permitted me," he wrote in his letter to the Treasurer Sanchez, "to do what no other mortal man has hitherto dared to do, for God hears the prayer of those who obey His commands and allows them to perform deeds that seemed to human understanding to be impossible. Whatever may have been surmised about these islands in this quarter or in that, no one before me has succeeded in gaining sight of them, and for that reason their existence has been relegated to the realm of fable. But now our gracious majesties and with them the whole of Christendom can offer the most joyful thanksgiving to our Saviour Jesus Christ for this victory and success. Let processions be arranged and sacred festivals be held; let the churches be decorated with green boughs and flowers, so that God in Heaven may rejoice over the earth and over the spread of His kingdom among heathen nations."

When he finished speaking he bent his white head and the king and queen fell on their knees beside him, and a solemn "Te Deum laudamus" by the choir and orchestra of the Chapel Royal transformed the worldly throne-room into a house of God filled with pious devotion and thankfulness.

And all the promises in his agreement were kept. The queen, especially, vied with everyone in loading the discoverer with honours. For she sincerely admired this man, who had not only succeeded in achieving a glorious deed, but who had also had the courage and self-control to pursue his aim for twenty years with inflexible faith and proudly stubborn perseverance, and to bear like a veritable Christophorus the heavy burden of universal scepticism, public disparagement, stinging ridicule and insulting suspicion. The command that summoned him to Barcelona already bore the superscription: "To Don Christobal Colon, our Admiral of the Ocean, Viceroy and Governor of the islands discovered in the Indies." The newly elected grandee was soon (30th May 1493) provided with a coat-of-arms: on its four fields were the tower and the lion of Castile and Leon, the crest of the ancient Colombi, and a group of golden islands surrounded by foaming seas, facing a golden mainland. This fourth field is therefore, in a manner, the first map of the islands discovered by Columbus. These were at once called by the old name of the legendary island of Antilia, and from that time they have



been named the Antilles.—The admiral, doubtless at the queen's personal desire, received the prize she had promised for the first sight of land, because on the night between the 11th and 12th October he had seen the light, which could not possibly have flared up unless on some coast or other. Along with his ambition not to allow his fame as a discoverer to be diminished even in the least degree, it was undoubtedly his anger at his rival's ship that kept Columbus from magnanimously forgoing this advantage. The sailor of the *Pinta* is said to have been so indignant at the award that he left his native country, renounced his faith and became a Mohammedan. To compensate for this lost soul, however, six Indians were received into the Church by the High Cardinal of Spain.—Diego, the admiral's eldest son, received a position at the Court. He was made page to the fifteen-year-old Crown Prince Juan, who died, however, only four years after. Columbus got his brother, Giacomo, who was still in Genoa, to come to Spain immediately; from that time onwards he assumed the name of Diego, and he took part in the second voyage.

For a few weeks Columbus was the chief attraction of the royal residence. The king was seen going out riding with him and the Infanta; he spent long hours with the queen reading out his notes to her and planning new ventures. His enemies were completely discomfited, and if envy was roused in any quarter it had to walk very warily at first. No one could refuse to give this favourite of the royal consorts the honour that was due to him, however incensed many of the arrogant grandes might be at having to tolerate this man without ancestors and with an unknown past as one who had equal rights with themselves. But those who had formerly laughed at the fantastic ideas of the Italian seafarer and had characterized his whole enterprise as insane foolhardiness, surreptitiously changed their tune, and when they were by themselves they would shrug their shoulders half in pity, half in contempt and murmur: "*Tant de bruit pour une omelette!*" The affair was by no means so wonderful after all, and many a hidalgo would give the table a blow and boast: "I could have done better myself! That Pinzon was a far more capable fellow!" But there were also a few shrewd persons who observed this swift change of mood with a quiet smirk and gave it due weight. In this set an anecdote was in circulation before long, which cannot be omitted here, whether

it is veracious or merely invented, since it is so closely linked with the name of Columbus. The incident is said to have taken place during the weeks of festivities in Barcelona, and a chronicler of the sixteenth century relates it as follows: "It chanced that when Columbus sat at a banquet or stately feast with many noble Spaniards, and there was talk, as was customary, concerning the new India, one of them addressed him thus: 'You, Christophore, even although you had not found India, yet in this our Spain, where there has never been any lack of excellent, learned persons, cosmographers and others, there would have been someone who would have made bold to do the same thing as you have done.'

"Whereupon Columbus made no answer, but had an egg brought to him, which he spun round on the table, and said to all: 'Now, gentlemen all, I shall wager a dinner with every one of you that none of you can do with this egg what I shall do with it, namely make it stand upright by itself, without any advantage or help.'—Then each of them attempted this, but none of them had the skill to do it.

"When, therefore, the egg had gone round the table and came back again to the hands of Columbus, he took it and striking it gently on the table, he so placed it that it remained standing. Thereupon the Spaniards all grew red with shame, for they well saw that which he meant to say to them in figurative fashion, namely: that once he had ventured to do this, it would afterwards plainly seem to anyone to be easy to do."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE PARTITION OF THE WORLD

WHETHER or not the islands that Columbus had discovered, India and the supposed mainland beyond, was the bridge leading to the kingdom of the Grand Khan, one thing was certain: all was new land, over which none of the world-powers of that day ruled. Hence according to the right of the stronger, a maxim that governed all political dealings, it belonged to the lucky finder, if he knew how to take and keep possession of it. Anyone who held that those who happened to be the original inhabitants of distant lands had a right of possession would have been laughed at as weak-minded. Were they Christians? That question settled everything. A non-Christian had not the slightest claim to any human rights, his freedom and his life were forfeited, and his property fell to those who proclaimed themselves his rulers. If this held good for the Moors and the Jews, whom Ferdinand the Catholic with the consent of Isabella drove from his realm with fire and sword in the same year (1492) that Columbus set out for the west—still more did it apply to savage heathen tribes or avowed idolaters, whose extermination brought credit on earth and in heaven. They were offered two valuable benefits—Christianity and European civilization. But the introduction of these benefits could not be accomplished without considerable expense, and as an indemnity for this the soil and its treasures, all goods and chattels and the produce of foreign labour were confiscated. First came the discoverer and the conqueror, most of them daring blades with a ready hand and a ready sword. They were followed by the ant-like swarm of traders, some of them pioneers under governmental supervision, others freebooters acting on their own responsibility. Those who commissioned them had excellent and praiseworthy intentions, but the execution of their orders was not in their hands. The conversion to Christianity was mostly carried out in such haste that there was no time to wait for a free choice. On the other hand, the spread of the benefits of civilization went on at

a still more leisurely pace than at home, where a too precipitate enlightenment of the masses of the people would only have menaced the security of those who happened to be in power. The obligation to civilize was regarded as being essentially fulfilled by the forcible introduction of Christianity. One thing alone was dreaded—competition. And this haunted Spain like a demon that watched every movement with jealous eyes.

At that time Portugal indisputably had the lead in discovery, and India was the chief goal to which her enterprises also were all directed. With stubborn perseverance she had groped her way to the west coast of Africa as far as the Cape of Good Hope, which Diaz reached in 1486. In the following year a Portuguese ship had pushed forward from the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf to Hindustan. Portugal only needed to complete the triangle by the route round the Cape of Good Hope to Calcutta, in order to be assured of an immense colonial empire where, by the papal sanction of 1459, no other nation could easily balk her plans. In addition to this, Portugal was settled in the Azores, the farthest outpost in the west. In this direction Spain had got the start of it by a bold panther-leap. Columbus could tell something about Portugal's attitude to this since his adventures in that country. But he did not know everything. He had no suspicion that he was by no means so safe in Valparaiso and Lisbon as he had imagined. Portuguese historians have established the fact that even in Valparaiso at the Court of John II there was a powerful party that demanded the removal of the discoverer. An unfortunate accident was to be staged in quite a gentlemanly fashion—contradiction of his tales, and angry exchange of words, a challenge to a duel—care was to be taken that he should be the one to fall—and then, off at once with a fleet to where he came from! This bandit-like trick seemed too risky to the king, after the attempted arrest of the whole crew at the Azores had miscarried. But he ordered the fleet to be equipped, and the news was spread that it was destined for Africa.

Still, Ferdinand was his superior in the political game. The umpire in such cases was the Pope. The Psalmist had promised the Church "the heathen for its inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for its possession." But since the Church itself could not take possession of those lands far out in the ocean and maintain its rule by the use of weapons, it delegated the sovereignty over them to the powers it deemed most worthy.

The relations between Rome and Castile at that time were not of the most friendly character, although Pope Alexander VI was by birth a Spaniard and a subject of King Ferdinand. But Castile had recently put an end to the dominion of the Moors in Europe; in addition to this it had expelled the Jews and had introduced the Inquisition as early as 1480. It was impossible that the Pope could decide otherwise than in favour of Spain when it came to the question of the allotment of these recently discovered countries. Ferdinand and Isabella did not even wait until Columbus returned; his letters to Sanchez and Santangel were enough for them. An embassy set out immediately for Rome, and their efforts were so successful that already on the 4th May 1493 a papal Bull (or rather two of them, on the 3rd and 4th May) ordained that "for all time coming the islands and continents that have been lately discovered by our beloved son, Christophorus Colon, shall be given to the monarchs of Castile and Leon; and that these monarchs shall possess these lands with the same privileges and prerogatives as the Papacy (in the years 1438 and 1459 for the countries from Cape Bojador as far as the East Indies) had granted to the kings of Portugal." The Bull of the 4th May enacted still more precisely that all the countries as far as the Indies west of a line of demarcation to be drawn from pole to pole, about 100 leagues from the Azores or the Cape de Verde Islands, should belong to the kingdom of Spain.

With this investiture there was involved the obligation of converting the inhabitants of these new possessions to Christianity. The papal Bull makes in this connection a very notable difference between the "peaceable, naked beings deprived of the sustenance of animal food, who believe in a God who is the Creator of heaven and earth," and are easy to convert, and the "barbaric tribes" whose "humbling" would most rejoice the heart of the Pope. This contrast shows clearly that the letter of Columbus to Sanchez was already in Rome. He, too, emphasizes the guilelessness and peaceableness of the Indians. He does not say in so many words that they are vegetarians, but that could be deduced from their lack of weapons and from his general description. In particular, however, he asserts that they were not idolaters and that they firmly believed that all power and might and all good things—like the ships of the Spaniards!—came from heaven. "Beasts" in the form of human beings, men-eaters

he had not come upon himself, he had only heard of them. It was difficult to imagine that these savages would be inclined to accept Christianity—the only method of any avail would be “humbling”—an ambiguous, diplomatic term which ultimately covered every drastic measure, including the last resort of extermination. Thus the papal Bull was at once a programme for the treatment of the aborigines which corresponded to the prevailing ideas regarding non-Christians’ total absence of rights, and at the same time a guide to the admiral for his future procedure.

This checkmated Portugal, for even if Ferdinand had determined in any case to assert his right to his overseas possessions, and his ambassadors in Rome had made no secret of this, there was scarcely any fear that Portugal would oppose the Roman decision, for that forbade all other nations to sail to the islands newly discovered or to be discovered and trade with them without the permission of Spain, under penalty of excommunication, and this penalty would have endangered all the rest of its colonial possessions. The only point at issue between the two States was the position of the line of demarcation. The Bull left it to the discretion of Spain to fix the place from which the hundred leagues should be measured. The Azores and Cape Verde, however, did not by any means lie on the same longitude. As a matter of course, Columbus was consulted on the question. Presumably these hundred leagues also can be traced back to his suggestion: for at that point the line was reached beyond which the “new earth” spoken of by the prophet was ushered in by a milder climate and by “a very great change in the sky and the starry heavens”—a fact he observed repeatedly and often emphasized on all his voyages. At first it was apparently intended that he should be sent to Rome in person so as in a manner to give a sensational effect to the proposal before the Holy See. At a later period in his letter to Pope Alexander VI of February 1502, Columbus speaks of the plan of making a journey to Rome after his return from his first voyage. However, owing to the preparations being already on foot for his second expedition, Columbus had to forgo his visit to Rome. But King Ferdinand certainly sent another embassy to Rome proposing that line of demarcation and making the extremely effective announcement that the admiral had promised to maintain for seven years with the revenue from his discoveries an army of 50,000 infantry and 5000 horse for the recovery and deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre,

a promise, the non-fulfilment of which Columbus in that letter of February 1502 to Alexander VI ascribes to the work of "Satan." This second embassy explains the fact that the line of demarcation was first settled in a supplementary document, in the Bull of the 4th May; the first Bull had in all likelihood been already completed.

Agreement with Portugal was not arrived at so quickly. The main question was: How should the line be drawn so as to include the largest part of India? On the 5th September 1493, even, Isabella wrote to Columbus: "Since it appears that many extremely rich islands must lie beyond the Cape of Good Hope on the route to the east by the Gold Coast and Guinea, and since the admiral knows this better than any other person, we therefore desire to hear whether there may not be something to improve in the papal Bull." Thus the taste had been acquired, and it was hoped that the Portuguese might be forestalled and that even the great prize in the East, which had been the goal of all their voyages along the coast of Africa might be captured from them. And Spain attained its end. An agreement was reached in the treaty of Tordesillas on the 7th June 1494, drawing the line of demarcation 370 leagues (2770 kilometres) west of Cape Verde, putting it thus far further towards the west. That looked like meeting Portugal more than half-way, as indeed it did, in so far as the largest part of South America was now reckoned on the Portuguese side. But no one at that time had any suspicion yet of the existence of South America, and the advantage of Spain lay in possessing the other half of the terrestrial globe, as men in those days conceived it—a great many more of those "rich islands" for which the two nations were struggling came into the Spanish zone of influence. The apple of the earth, therefore, was cut into two halves, a Spanish and a Portuguese, and this Judgment of Solomon remained a cause of strife for centuries between the two seafaring nations.

The negotiations were cleverly drawn out by the Spanish party. They wanted to gain still more accurate information about the geography of the West by a second expedition, for which the preparations were pushed on with the greatest speed. Columbus did not answer the queen's letter of the 5th September until the 30th January 1494 when he wrote from Haiti; but this letter has disappeared.

Meanwhile the diplomatic machinery between the two countries

worked with furious energy, and each of them sought by every means within its power to undermine the position of its opponent. Portugal ventured to bribe several of Ferdinand's trusted counsellors with large sums of money; it was thus kept informed beforehand of every step the Spanish government intended to take; the traitors were never discovered. Barcelona teemed with invisible spies. In itself that was nothing unusual. The department concerned with discoveries was always a centre of espionage. Each state had its system of espionage and each government treated news of discoveries as a State secret. Hence, although Columbus' discoveries made a great stir among diplomats and merchants who communicated them to one another in their reports and letters, they did not by any means become so quickly known to the mass of the people. His letter to Sanchez was translated into Latin and appeared in Rome as early as 1493—the embassy to the Pope was certainly the intermediary—and in two years it was nine times printed there. Not until 1497 was the German translation circulated as a broadsheet. But who understood Latin? And above all who were able to read it? None of those who had more accurate information of these events, least of all the governments, saw any occasion to tell the general public about them. On the contrary, every fresh discovery was first of all a State secret, which was rigorously guarded. The export of charts of the route to Hindustan was punishable in Portugal by death, and reports of voyages overseas were subjected to a keen censorship before they were made public. Especially every statement regarding the prospects and possibilities of trade was deleted; such statements would only draw the attention of others to those distant riches.

In the meantime the route to the new islands was free mainly for governmental enterprises. All the keener was the competition for every scrap of news about it. The queen's letter to Columbus on the 5th September 1493 makes it clear enough that the Spanish Court swarmed with spies. In Barcelona he had entrusted her with his "Book of Positions," apparently the diary itself, or a collection of sketch-maps giving the positions of the new islands along with explanatory descriptions. She did not return it to him until she sent that letter, excusing herself for the delay by saying that "it required a safe opportunity, so that the secret might be kept from the hostile Portuguese who were at the Court!" Then she goes on to say: "We alone have seen the



book that you left behind for us. The more we read it and reflected on it the clearer it became to us that your enterprise was a magnificent one and that you knew more about it than any other mortal. May you follow this course you have already begun! But we desire to have a better understanding of your book; we wish to know the latitude in which the mainland and the islands lie that you have found and the latitude of the course you took. You will therefore, even before your departure, forward to us the chart, which, however, you should complete and supply with all the requisite names, and at the same time let us know whether, perhaps, it may not be expedient to keep it secret."

Columbus had promised to give their majesties this chart of his first voyage before he set out. In September 1493 it had not been delivered yet. Had Columbus not finished it by that time? At any rate that was the excuse he gave for his delay. It is likely, too, that he made some reference to the uncertainty of his astronomical observations. Accordingly, the queen in the same letter of the 5th September advised him to take a capable astronomer with him on his second voyage. He should be someone like his friend, the Franciscan monk Antonio de Marchena of the cloister of La Rábida, a man who, in addition to the necessary knowledge, had a "submissive spirit" that would make him compliant to the will of his superiors, for peace had to reign on the admiral's ship. Certainly Columbus was unable, in the midst of the final preparations for his second voyage, to complete the chart he had been asked to send; even the queen would at last understand that. Thus he could easily avoid obeying the royal command. For he was firmly resolved never in any event to hand over the chart—that was *his* trade-secret.

Was he distrustful? Undoubtedly he was. Since his glorious return, all his stipulated rights had been generously confirmed. He was an admiral, viceroy and governor of all the islands that had been discovered or were still to be discovered and he bore the royal seal. He was now made Captain-General of a fleet of seventeen vessels, and he had unrestricted power over the crews and over the settlements in the New World. He was free to make his own decisions, and the fleet had to go wherever he took it. He was allowed to commandeer any ship that seemed to him suitable for his new expedition. Any sailor or officer for whom he made requisition had to put himself under his command. Equipment, munitions, victuals—all were at his disposal, he had

only to stretch out his hand and take them. He did not need to have any worry about money; the property of the Jews who had been expelled was taken to cover expenses. All salaries and wages were liberally paid by the government. The sailors, soldiers, artisans, miners and all the others who seemed necessary for the founding of a colony, formed an army of 1500 men, over whom he had unlimited sway. When he left Barcelona on the 28th May 1493, escorted by the whole Court, he, the upstart from one of the poor quarters of Genoa, was one of the most powerful men in Spain and the special object of the royal favour. But Alvaro de Luna, the most powerful minister of Spain, had enjoyed this same favour for a whole generation, and yet in the reign of Ferdinand's predecessor he died—on the scaffold.

The undertaking that had had its inception in the mind of Columbus, in his endurance and daring, grew in a short time to such an extent that no single hand could control it any longer. For that reason the Spanish government immediately established a Colonial Office, at the head of which it placed the Archdeacon of Seville, Bishop Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca. For thirty years he had held the Ministry of Indian Affairs, and in the end he became the Patriarch of India. He was in Spain and remained there, always at the ear of the king and wielding his power from the official board-room. This inevitably brought him sooner or later into conflict with the persons who were doing the work and he was not particularly friendly to Columbus. Twelve clerics accompanied the second expedition for the work of converting the heathen. At their head was the Benedictine monk, Bernardo Buyl, whom the Pope appointed Apostolic Vicar of the New World. He was soon to become Columbus' bitterest enemy.

Columbus was prepared for disputes with his co-workers. There would be new Pinzons, who would seek and would obtain authority along with him or over him. He no longer now shouldered the whole responsibility, he had to share it in the first place with Fonseca and certainly before long would have to share it with others as well. Once the machinery was in working order—how soon after that the moment would come when he could be dispensed with! Which of the great discoverers had not complained of the government in whose service he had been employed? On neither side was there any national or moral obligation; many changed their employers like the Italian condottieri or the German mercenaries. The connection

was purely a business one. If any of them became more insistent in his claims than was convenient, if he became too powerful, a single moment, a word, or a petty intrigue of his enemy would be sufficient to dispose of him. The partner would be dropped, his agreement cancelled, or he would receive short shrift in other ways, after everything he could teach had been learned from him. Divide et impera! (Divide and rule thereby!) was the unfailing policy of every government. The fate of his Portuguese colleague, Diaz, who was not allowed to sail any farther in the direction of India, although he had found the route to it round the south cape of Africa, simply "to avoid being under so great a debt to anyone" had been and still was, a warning example to Columbus. He had plenty of enemies who would certainly not always give him peace, and there would inevitably be others who would envy him. Besides, he was not a Spaniard! If monarchs did not keep to their agreement—where at that time was there a court that would condemn them? What, then, would become of the great design, the realization of which was to crown his life's task? He was solemnly in earnest about the new crusade for the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre; he regarded the promise he had given the Pope as a vow, and he did not wish to stand before his God as one who had been false to his oath. He had therefore to secure a mutual settlement in connection with his new enterprises in the West and the disposal of the revenues from them; and he could not be deprived of his permanent rights under this mutual agreement, so long as he was—indispensable. It was of the first importance that he should not let his chief trump card out of his hand, and Columbus regarded the chart of his first voyage as this trump.

He had even scrupulously guarded it from the view of his pilot. On the return voyage as well he had employed the ruse of making wrong records of the distances covered, only in the reverse direction, in order to mislead his associates. And he succeeded in doing this. When they were in the vicinity of the Azores and they all made random guesses as to their bearings, each of them naming a different position, he proved his superiority to them—he alone knew where they were! He says this himself in his diary with unmistakable satisfaction, and if the queen, as may be assumed, read those lines, she knew very well what he had done. This secrecy towards subordinates was quite to her liking, but between her and her admiral there had to be

absolute confidence. Columbus was evidently opposed to this. For that very reason she tried to wring his secret from him. After the first voyage she had not succeeded in doing this; Columbus did not hand over the chart to her. The process was repeated during the second voyage. Once more she asked exact information from him about "how many islands he had discovered, what were the names he gave them, and at what distances they lay from one another"—particulars that anyone would necessarily require, who wanted to find his way about in those regions—without Columbus!—above all the administrative official who had never seen any of those foreign lands with his own eyes. Columbus had taken good care not to have with him another astronomer who might replace him, not merely from pride in his own modest acquirements which he shared with all his contemporaries who were versed in astronomy. And if, in obedience to the renewed command on the 16th August 1494, he supplied the required information—though we know nothing about this—then that information would be so carefully guarded that it did not give away everything. He was not only an official of the Spanish government, he was also a partner in a common concern, which involved immense sums of money, and he wished to prevent his being cast aside, as soon as the government grew tired of him or thought that it no longer needed him. He regarded himself as the *giver*, and he did not wish to be left empty-handed, when the world was parcelled out among states, to one of which he was bound by nothing but a mutual feeling of gratitude. He says this once again for the last time very explicitly in his will, which contains this proud sentence:

"I presented India to our monarchs; for on behalf of God I gave it to them as a thing that belonged to me; in a certain measure I caused them embarrassment by forcing them to accept it; for these lands were hidden and no one knew the way that led to them."

He wished to remain this "no one" as long as possible!

## CHAPTER XXIX

### ON VOYAGE FOR THE SECOND TIME

NOT three wretched vessels from Palos, but fourteen stately caravels, and three transport ships, with a company of 1500 men left the harbour of Cadiz on the 25th September 1493 amidst the exultant cheers of the whole population, on the second voyage to the newly discovered lands of gold and wonder in the west. The ocean waste of the "Dark Sea" of the ancients had lost its terrors. The earth was suddenly one round whole, the inspired instinct of a single individual had given it its final shape. Was the earth a globe? Of course it was! Columbus had given practical proof of that. By the spell of a magician who had been daring enough to follow the sun in its course, a gate to India other than the one hitherto sought in vain, had sprung open with a strident clank, and through it there now thronged a turbulent crowd—sailors and soldiers, captains, officers, officials and missionaries, artisans of various trades, noblemen and malefactors, adventurers and speculators, men willing to work who were hungry for land, and professional idlers impelled by the thirst for gold and the love of adventure—to scramble for the treasures of a primeval world as yet untouched, and to pay for them with the counters of European civilization. Anyone who was allowed to take ship was no longer, as he had been a year before, bewailed as a destined victim, but was envied as a man who had been born under a lucky star.

The fleet took the route by the Canary Islands. There an important cargo was taken on board that transformed two of the transport ships into Noah's arks. Cattle and calves bellowed in the stalls, sheep and goats bleated, and eight pigs grunted—the ancestors of an immense stock of wild swine, for which in later days the Spanish Antilles were noted. Watch dogs, mastiffs, loafed about everywhere. Fowls of every description cackled and cheeped in every corner, frequenting by choice the neighbourhood of the horses' stalls, where twenty lancers kept their fifty mounts. Asses and mules kept them company. Every available space was chock-full, of casks with hay, wheat and other grain, intended

partly for fodder and partly for seed; of bundles of young apple-trees and vine-stocks; of loads of provisions and casks of wine piled up high; of chests and trunks filled with clothes, domestic utensils and everything necessary for the poorest emigrant over yonder; of huge loads of beads and such like trash, the medium of exchange for the natives, and, last but not least, of weapons, guns, munitions and implements of war, as though for a campaign or a siege. The admiral's flag flew from the third transport ship the *Maria Galante*; there the viceroy of India, with his staff and his domestics had his quarters; his youngest brother Diego, not long before that a weaver or casual hand in some poor workshop in Genoa or Savona, accompanied him. A large number of noblemen with their retinues were distributed among the caravels. The youthful Alonzo de Hojeda, renowned among the cavaliers for his strength and valour, his hardihood and recklessness, attached himself to the admiral.

Delayed by calms the fleet did not put out to sea from Gomera until the 13th October. This time it had a fixed objective—La Navidad, the tiny Spanish settlement on Hispaniola (Haiti). Each captain had sealed orders, which he was only allowed to open in the event of the fleet being scattered by a storm; these orders were kept a State secret in order to conceal the route to India from Portuguese spies or unauthorized freebooters. So long as this emergency did not occur all the ships were to obey the instructions of the admiral.

Columbus this time took a more southerly course, in order to reach one of the islands lying off Haiti towards the east and thus arrive sooner at land. The live-stock he had on board made this especially desirable. His reckoning held good. Although the admiral's ship was slow and prolonged the voyage, yet as early as the 5th November there came into sight one of the Lesser Antilles which form a bridge to the continent of South America, at that time unknown, and shut off towards the east the Caribbean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean. He called it Dominica, the Lord's Day, because it was discovered in the early twilight of a Sunday morning. This is the name it still bears at the present day.

It lay in the middle of the ocean like a magnificent green mountain. To the right of it a second island was seen, which, however, was quite flat, though it also was densely wooded; and when the day broke, four other islands, some of them very large, came into view farther off. Since no anchorage could be found

on the precipitous coast of Dominica, the fleet held on to the next island. Here the admiral went on shore with a large retinue of knights and officials, and with the usual ceremonies he unfurled the royal standard in token of annexation. The island was covered down to the beach with a magnificent forest teeming with all kinds of unknown trees with glorious foliage and bearing both blossom and fruit at the same time. Many of them reminded the Spaniards of trees and plants, laurels and others, in their native land, and their leaves exhaled a fragrance like cloves. They were all laden with luxuriant fruitage, but when some of the men plucked this unknown fruit or merely touched it with the tip of their tongue their faces immediately became inflamed and terribly swollen, causing them agonizing pain. The ship's physician had his hands full trying to reduce the inflammation with cooling remedies. It was the fruit of the poisonous manchineel tree that acted so quickly. Several huts and people had been observed on Dominica in sailing past, but this second island, "Maria Galante," seemed quite uninhabited.

On the following morning Columbus sailed across to a third very large island. From this rose a majestic mountain, whose lofty peak, formed like a volcano, shone in dazzling white. On the ships bets were made as to whether this was water or rocks. Not until they drew nearer to the island was it evident what this marvellous spectacle meant. Foaming cascades were streaming down from the dizzy heights on every side.

Columbus resolved to cast anchor here, in order to give the crew, who were delighted with the sight of solid land, a little rest and enjoyment after the fatigue and hardships of the voyage, and to make a thorough investigation of the newly discovered island. He gave it the name of Guadelupe after the famous Spanish Hieronymite cloister where the monks had received him with special friendliness, when in the spring of that year he had made a devout pilgrimage to it in faithful fulfilment of his vow.

## CHAPTER XXX

### AMONG CANNIBALS

A light caravel was ordered to tack about and search for a harbour. As the captain had noticed some cabins near the coast he went ashore in the long-boat. It was a village of twenty or thirty houses built round a clearing. The houses were not circular, as they had been on the islands that had been seen before, but square, built of logs, with walls made of reeds and boughs, roofed with palm-leaves and even decorated with wood-carvings chiefly in the form of serpents. The inhabitants had fled pell mell, even abandoning their infants, who were howling pitifully, and left everything as it stood the moment before the arrival of the strangers. Huge bales of cotton were piled up, some of it already spun and wrought into fine clothes and coverings. Bows and arrows with sharp tips made of fish-bone were lying about everywhere, and there was food in abundance. Tame geese and parrots with gorgeous plumage seemed to be domestic pets. It was here that the Spaniards first found bananas, and they were delighted with their scent and flavour. In one of the houses they found the stern of a ship—had some unknown mariner got into difficulties here? Had he been wrecked on this coast? What had become of the crew? Or had the wreck been carried across the whole ocean by trade-winds and currents?

Human skulls hung on the door-posts of the houses—in the rooms human skulls were used for flower-vases and culinary vessels! And as the Spaniards rummaged about in the abandoned dwellings they came upon something that froze their blood with horror—preparations for horrible feasts and the relics of these feasts, gnawed bones and portions of human arms and legs simmering on a fire that was still burning. They knew now where they were—among the man-eaters, about whom the Indians from Guanahani had so many tales to tell the admiral, and whom they had called Caribs, a word which they had taken to be Caniba and had associated with the Grand Khan.

In the evening a good harbour was found some leagues farther



on. Here the ships cast anchor. On the following morning the admiral sent on shore a squad of soldiers, who undertook roving expeditions in separate groups in all directions. Some of the men returned about midday and brought with them a youth of about fourteen years old, who as it turned out later, had been held captive on the island. A second group returned with a little boy whom his father had abandoned. Several native women were also brought in, and others followed of their own accord; these latter had also been taken captive by the Indians there, and set free from their awful fate by the foreigners. From them the Spaniards received a more accurate account of the barbarous customs of these aborigines. The whole neighbourhood for a hundred-and-fifty hours' journey round was harrassed by the Caribs, who raided the coasts in their large canoes and carried off men, boys, and young pretty women or girls. The men were put to death according as they required them, their newly-killed flesh being considered a great delicacy. Boys were mutilated and then systematically fattened until they were ready for eating. The women served as slaves and concubines, and the children they bore were also destined for the cooking-pot. Only children of their own tribe were exempted from this fate. In addition to Guadelupe two other islands were inhabited by the Caribs. The men on all three islands made their raids in common but they lived in complete harmony with one another. For the moment there were very few men at home; the others, ten canoes strong, had just gone off again on a raiding expedition.

A few Indians made their appearance on the beach after they had got over their first fright. They stood there without moving and gazed at the ships. They wore their hair long, and had black circles painted round their eyes, and this gave them a very sinister appearance. If a boat drew in to the shore, they shouted "*Taino! Taino!*" which meant "good." They even quite calmly allowed the sailors to go up to them, but they could not be enticed by any presents and they were always ready to flee into the adjacent forest. Not one of them could be induced to go on board the ship of his own free will. Two of them were forcibly carried to the admiral. They wore on each leg two rings of cotton, one at the knee, the other above the ankle. These rings were tied very tight and made the calves of their legs stouter, or made them look stouter. This was considered a sign of beauty and was their distinctive tribal mark.

The story told by the liberated captives with the help of the interpreters was confirmed by the patrols who returned in the evening. They had seen human limbs hanging from the roof-beams like smoke-cured wares; a man's head still bleeding lay beside a pot of goose-giblets, and in another house a human neck was grilling at the fire.

The crew already excited by these discoveries were startled by the news that one of the captains with six men had landed on this gruesome island without orders from the admiral, and had not returned though it was now late in the evening. A fresh reconnoitring party was sent out immediately, but in the darkness they did not get very far. The ships sent out light-signals; shots from flint-locks and cannons wakened echoes in the neighbouring mountains; trumpets blared through the whole night. No answer came. On the next morning, too, there was no sign of the men who had disappeared. Alonzo de Hojeda with forty men ranged the wilds in all directions, and the soul of the huntsman revelled in the spectacle of the hawks and king-fishers, wood-pigeons and partridges, that swarmed in this almost untrodden primeval forest. Signals of alarm were given continuously with flint-locks or trumpets. No sound came back. The search was kept up for three days without any result—finally the seven men had to be given up for lost. They were experienced seamen and they should certainly have been able to find their way back by the stars at least to the coast. They had evidently been trapped somewhere by a superior force of aborigines—no one had heard any shot—and in that case their fate was sealed. The Caribs had had their first taste of European flesh.

Suddenly on the fourth day a shot rang out from the coast in the distance, and the men who had disappeared turned up utterly exhausted. They had, as a matter of fact, got so completely lost in the forest, that they did not know which way to turn to free themselves from the dense, dark underwood and reach the daylight again; they waded through streams, climbed cliffs and trees without gaining sight of open country, and at last quite unexpectedly reached the coast, where, thank Heaven! they saw the fleet still lying in the harbour. Still they brought a few women and children with them. They had not caught sight of any men at all. The insubordinate captain was put under arrest, and the crew were punished by having their daily rations reduced.

The lack of discipline particularly at that time, and all that had

been experienced on this island caused the admiral the greatest uneasiness. Had the Caribs raided the territory of his friend Guacanagari? In that event what had become of the men in La Navidad?

At last on the 10th November he was able to resume the voyage. Guadelupe was left behind on the right. Island after island came into view. On the 14th the ships anchored at the densely populated coast of Santa Cruz, and the admiral sent a boat on shore with twenty-five men. Again they found only the women and children of the aborigines and prisoners destined to be slaughtered. They took six women with them into the boat. Just as they were about to push off, those on board the ships drew their attention to a canoe with seven natives in it that had lain motionless for an hour in the reeds beside the shore. The Indians were so entirely taken up with watching the ships that they did not notice the long-boat until it was close upon them. Since they could not take to their heels, the five men and the two women in the canoe attacked the Spaniards with astonishing boldness, wounding two of them in spite of their shields and corslets. They went on fighting desperately even when their canoe was rammed and floated bottom-up. They found a foothold in the shallow water and shot with great accuracy. Only one of them who had been severely wounded by a lancer fell into the hands of the Spaniards, the rest escaped. The Indian who had been taken prisoner died before he could be taken to the ship, nor could one of the wounded Spaniards be saved; he had been hit by a poisoned arrow.

The result of this skirmish proved that in spite of the superiority of the Spanish weapons, it would not be easy to obtain permanent occupation of these islands without violent conflicts, and that the Spaniards had to be prepared for a desperate resistance at least on the part of these Caribs. The cannibals had already destroyed the entire population of numerous islands; it went without saying, therefore, that their extermination was a humane and Christian duty.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### RUINS AND CORPSES

AFTER the ships had sailed past a succession of unknown islands, among which was one very large island called Burenquen (today Porto Rico), on the 22nd November 1493, land came in sight, which according to the statements of the Indians on board was the eastern corner of Hispaniola. They sailed cautiously along this coast and in a few days they reached the harbour of Monte Christi, where they remained for two days.

As a river with excellent water discharged itself here, Columbus had fixed his eye on this locality as being suitable for a second settlement. It proved, however, to be too damp and unhealthy, and the sailors on the very first day of their survey of the ground made an alarming discovery—in a copse on the river bank they found the dead bodies of two men, one of which was bound to a stake, arms outstretched in the form of a cross, while a cord had been tied round the feet of the other one. Nothing more could be made out as the bodies were already too decomposed. Were they Indians—or Spaniards? For the first time the admiral was seized with the presentment that he was to be the victim of a malignant fate. And this terrible foreboding became a certainty on the following day. Two more corpses were found—one of them had a vigorous beard—the Indians were without exception beardless—so the dead man could only have been a Spaniard, one of their comrades from La Navidad, which was only twelve leagues distant! What had happened there?

The admiral sent a caravel on in front. The fleet followed and came to anchor late on the evening of the 27th before a small bay near La Navidad. The ships could not enter the bight, however, as the water was too shallow; the caravel that had been sent on ahead was already fast aground on one of the shoals. The *Santa Maria* had been wrecked somewhere near that same place in December. The whole of the following day was passed in making soundings and marking out the fairway. None of the men in the fort could be seen; strangely enough, they had evidently not

learned of the arrival of the fleet! When towards evening the ships were again able to get on, a canoe with half-a-dozen Indians in it came rowing swiftly out to them from the shore; but they turned back again, as the admiral did not wait for them.

As soon as the vessels came to anchor in the Bight of Caracol the admiral ordered two cannon-shots to be fired. But no answer came—everything was as still as death. No light was to be seen on the beach. The settlers at La Navidad certainly had guns, and they must have heard the signal. Why did they not answer?

In the middle of the night the canoe seen the day before appeared again and rowed up to one of the caravels—Where was the admiral? The Indians were directed to the flagship, but they only went on board after the admiral had made his appearance and they had recognized him by the light of a lantern. Their leader was a confidant of Guacanagari's and, in the name of the cacique, he handed over a mask of gold as a present for the admiral. The latter had a conversation lasting several hours with the Indians in the presence of his crew. Why had his friend Guacanagari not come himself? They replied that he had been wounded; two hostile caciques, Caonabo, the owner of the gold-mines of Cibao, and Mayreni had overrun his country with armed forces and had destroyed all their dwellings; several of the Spaniards had died of illnesses, and others had fallen in bloodthirsty combats among themselves; the rest of them had scattered here and there and were living with native women; they were doing well. The ambassadors took their departure, promising to return in the morning accompanied by Guacanagari. Then some of the garrison were all right! But on that the interpreter—the last of the natives of Guanahani still alive, who had received in baptism the name of Diego Colon—announced that one of the Indians had revealed to him that all the Spaniards were dead!

On the following morning Columbus sent a squad of soldiers and sailors to Guacanagari's residence. They only found the site where it must have stood—desolate, blackened relics of a conflagration—nothing else! The fort of the Spaniards, too, was razed to the ground. Here and there among the charred ruins and the ash-heaps lay some Spanish garments, that had evidently been flung away at the last moment. Indians whom the Spaniards came upon in the neighbourhood slunk timidly and sullenly out of sight. There was none of the friendliness which the admiral a year ago could scarcely keep within bounds! At last four of

them came up, took gifts from the Spaniards and accompanied them in their canoe to the flag-ship. One of them was a relative of Guacanagari, and he confirmed what the interpreter had heard—the enemies had massacred the entire Spanish garrison, destroyed everything and had also wounded many of the villagers. Guacanagari himself had been wounded in the leg by a spear and was hiding from the enemy. When this bearer of ill tidings had promised to fetch the cacique at once, he was hospitably entertained and presented with gifts. He rowed back to the shore with his companions, but the Spaniards waited in vain for his return. Guacanagari sent no word.

Next day Columbus betook himself to the scene of the disaster. Charred ruins—the few coats and cloaks—these were all that was left of the first Spanish settlement! Nothing else—no weapons, even the guns had disappeared, no dead bodies to be found—what tragedy had been enacted here? Columbus gave orders to excavate the ruins—perhaps some clues might be found there. When he set out from here on the 2nd January he had ordered the commandant to bury in the ground the gold that had been gathered. Meanwhile he and the others with him proceeded farther along the coast with the view of discovering a place suitable for a new building. They came upon a few Indian cabins; the inhabitants snatched up everything they could carry and disappeared into the tall grass that surrounded the marshy locality, but there were numerous articles still left in the cabins that must have belonged to the garrison! As the Spaniards rummaged about they discovered in a hidden corner a basket that had been carefully sewn up—what was in it? A well-preserved human skull! Most of the men who were with the admiral were now convinced that Guacanagari was a traitor! But the destruction of his residence and his own wound contradicted that. It was no proof of his complicity that the natives in the vicinity, after the plundering and destruction of the fort, had found all kinds of articles either lying among the debris or dug up from it, and had dragged them off to their cabins. But what about this carefully concealed head? And afterwards they found more heads like it! These had been seen before only in Cuba and, in the past few days, among the Caribs. Were they trophies or memorials for their beloved dead? It was never proved that they were the heads of Spaniards.

When Columbus returned to the site of the fire, several Indians had turned up who bartered gold for beads, etc. They seemed to

be well informed as to what had happened and pointed to a piece of ground overgrown with grass, saying that eleven Spaniards were buried there. They were all agreed that the hostile caciques had killed them; but the Christians had fought among themselves for women and each of them had had three or four. Columbus and a few of those who accompanied him had suspected something of this sort before: evidently the men who had been massacred had been partly—if not wholly—to blame themselves! Otherwise, in view of the superiority of the Spanish weapons, such an overwhelming catastrophe was inconceivable. Quarrels among themselves, due to jealousy, greed and ambition, had frittered away their strength, and the hordes of hostile Indians, finding the fort carelessly guarded and scarcely any defence made, had had little difficulty in overcoming them. Besides, the Spaniards by their brutal treatment had transformed the gentle subjects of Guacanagari into desperate enemies.

Next day a caravel continuing the search for a suitable building-place came upon a canoe, in which there was a man whom the pilot recognized as a brother of Guacanagari. The cacique gave an urgent invitation to the captain to visit him at the place where he was staying, which was not very far away. The Spaniards accepted the invitation and found him lying in his hammock. His thigh was covered with a thick bandage, and he complained of severe pains. His account of the destruction of the fort and the massacre of the garrison agreed in every particular with the story they had already heard. He gave his visitors liberal presents of gold and invited the admiral to come to him, since his pain prevented him from going to see the admiral.

On the very next morning the cacique's brother also came again and renewed the invitation. Columbus accordingly set out towards midday and arrived at Guacanagari's residence with all his captains and a large staff, every one in dazzling uniform. He was still lying in his hammock and did not rise, but he received his guests with perfect courtesy and wept in sorrow for the massacre of the garrison. The most of them, he said, were slain when searching for gold-mines in Caonabo's province. He overwhelmed the admiral with valuable gifts of gold and polished stones, and accepted the return gifts in a dignified manner. As Dr. Chanca and a ship's surgeon were present, Columbus asked Guacanagari if he would not show his wound to the physicians. He was not very willing to do this, but he was persuaded to clamber out of

his hammock and hobble out into the open, leaning on the admiral's arm, for it was too dark in the cabin for an inspection of the wound. The bandage was removed, but there was no sign of the wound, which he said had been caused by a stone thrown at him. Dr. Chanca was convinced that the patient greatly exaggerated his sufferings, and that his facial contortions were rather too violent. But there could be no possible doubt that a raid and a fight had taken place about two months previously. Even Columbus could not avoid being a little suspicious. On the other hand he well understood that the cacique, even though he were completely blameless, was greatly troubled at the slaughter of the Spaniards who had been entrusted to his protection, and that above all he was afraid he might be blamed for the misfortune. Not a single Spaniard remained to bear witness in his defence; the only evidence he had was the burnt ruins of his residence and an injury which he had very likely received in cowardly flight. It had long since been healed in the two months that had elapsed; it still gave him some pain, which he magnified, but otherwise there was no trace of any wound. The Apostolic Vicar Father Buyl, who accompanied the admiral, advised him to imprison the cacique and make an example of him. But Columbus could not make up his mind to do that. So long as there were no more weighty reasons for suspecting him, the wisest course was, in any case, not to betray the least mistrust and also not to turn his only, if rather feeble, ally into an opponent. Besides the most guileless of the natives had certainly long since lost their belief in the supernatural power and heavenly origin of the Spaniards, as a result of their conduct and of their shameful defeat. Moreover all around there lay in ambush blood-thirsty foes, whose prowess in warfare had been grievously underestimated. Proof of that was seen in the ruins of La Navidad, in the secure cellar of which Columbus had expected to find a cask of gold.

He therefore took his leave of Guacanagari on the old terms of friendship, and the latter was so reassured and overjoyed by the admiral's trust in him that he returned the visit no later than the next day. He was carried on board and was once again the naïve child of nature, enraptured by all the wonderful things that were shown him. He had never seen quadrupeds before, with the exception of a species of rabbit or rodent, which was indigenous on Haiti and was hunted by the natives. The horses especially fascinated him. But it was not long before his curiosity was



suddenly attracted in another direction. He noticed on board ten women who had escaped to the Spaniards from their captivity among the Caribs, but had not been put ashore at their native island of Porto Rico. Among them was one, who had been given the name of Catalina, and whose beauty and pride of bearing had particularly struck him. The amorous tone in which he carried on his conversation with her could not be mistaken, and he was very reluctant to leave this group of women, whose fate evidently engrossed his thoughts. He was delighted to hear that the admiral intended to build afresh there in the neighbourhood, but he warned him about the unhealthy moistness of that locality, and at table he seemed to be distraught and restless. He took an unusually early departure and was carried to his canoe again.

Early the next morning an Indian came rowing across and asked, on behalf of the cacique, how long the admiral meant to stay there. Until tomorrow was the reply. Not long after that Guacanagari's brother arrived and bartered gold for all sorts of trifles. Then he, too, had to admire the wonders his brother had told him about, the horses etc. On his tour of inspection he also met the women from Porto Rico, and was soon eagerly conversing with them. Then he rushed off in headlong haste.

During the night, however, the alarm was sounded on the admiral's ship. The watch reported that the ten women from Porto Rico had gone off! There behind the stern they were swimming to the shore! They were immediately pursued, but the sturdy swimmers had such a long start that only four of them could be brought on board again. The other six, among whom was the handsome Catalina, disappeared in the forest, and when the admiral on the following day sent to Guacanagari to request him to give back the fugitives, if they were with him, the nest was empty. The cacique had found a secure refuge for his new harem.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE TOWN ISABELLA AND FORT ST. THOMAS

**G**UACANAGARI was right: the surroundings of the ill-fated site of La Navida were too damp and unhealthy for a new fort to be built there; besides the constant recollection of the men who had died there was bound to depress the spirits of the men. On the 7th December 1493 the flotilla was therefore again under sail, and returning eastwards it struggled on with unspeakable difficulty against an obstinate head wind as far as ten leagues beyond the harbour of Monte Christi, where at last a suitable site was found. Two rivers flowed into the sea there, and a headland jutting out into a large bay seemed an ideal place for the construction of a fortified town. On the landward side it was protected by precipitous cliffs and by a part of the primeval forest, where the succulent verdure ruled out of account all danger of fire.

Now the ships could be unloaded. The animals left their fusty, damp stalls, and in the broad daylight looked wretched, especially the horses. Sacks, chests and trunks were taken on shore; the most of them had become mouldy from lying in the wet holds, and the first thing done to them was to dry them in the sun. An effective guard occupied tents on shore, while the rest of the crews returned in the evening to their berths on board. And now a feverish activity began: trees were felled to provide timber for the dwelling-houses, stones were hewn to be used as material for a protecting wall, for the church, a storehouse and the residence of the viceroy. A stream, intended to drive a mill, was led from the larger of the two rivers right through the centre of the building-plot. The field-workers broke up large stretches of ground never before cultivated and sowed them with wheat, corn and oats. In places well exposed to the sun vines, olives, lemons and oranges were planted. In the timber-yards there were stacks of beams and boards, and the work went on so vigorously that as early as the 7th February the church was consecrated with impressive ceremonies. The

resonant peal of the bell hung from a scaffold beside the nave of the church enraptured the Indians; they were never tired of listening to its heavenly voice. Meanwhile some enterprising officers had explored the surrounding country far and near. The place chosen for the building of the town was especially suitable, for the reason that it was within reach of the shortest route to the gold-mines of Cibao, whose riches, according to the statements of the aborigines, passed all belief. Alonzo de Hojeda, with a troop of daring horsemen, had made incursions into the interior and despite the panic which the sight of the horses created, was received by the natives with the greatest delight and with boundless hospitality. A search in the rivers yielded such strong proofs of the presence of gold that an immense store of the precious metal was bound to exist in the localities from which the rivers sprang. Their sources were certainly high up in the mountains, where the dreaded Caonabo, the "lord of the golden house," ruled, who had been the chief instigator of the expedition against the first Spanish settlement. Another cavalier also, the youthful Gorvalan, came back with an exploring party and gave a similar report. He joined his ship at once, for it was high time that twelve of the caravels went back to Spain and brought fresh stores of provisions and other necessities as soon as possible. Much of the available supply was spoiled, the stock of animals had now run very low, some things had been forgotten or a sufficient quantity of other articles had not been brought. Columbus made a comprehensive memorandum of all the requirements. The yield of pure gold was up till then very meagre, but the prospects were so promising that even the physician, Dr. Chanca, in a letter written to the senate of his native city Seville and also intended for the Spanish monarchs, said he believed he could tell them of downright miracles. All the men, women and children of the cannibals who had been captured on the coast were divided between two of the returning ships. They were to be trained as interpreters and converted to Christianity. For it was evident from all that had been seen of them that, apart from their reprehensible liking for human flesh, they were superior in intelligence and, to a certain degree, in civilization to the natives of Hispaniola. When one of the captured cannibals saw an iron nail for the first time he asked the admiral to be told that if he brought the Caribs nails like that with points and heads he could have as much gold as he liked.

Antonio de Torres was in command of the flotilla. The cavalier Gorvalan accompanied him. On the 2nd February 1494 the ships left Hispaniola; on the 16th March they landed safely at Cadiz, the harbour from which they had set out.

When would the provision ship return again to Isabella? This question caused the admiral the gravest concern—and not only him, but the crew as well. Many of them had gazed with envy and sullen resignation after the little band who were going back home. That gruesome night at La Navidad oppressed their spirits. The natives no longer showed that submissiveness and enthusiasm in the presence of the sons of heaven which had allowed those who took part in the first voyage to carry themselves like lords of creation. An oppressive sense prevailed that meantime there was only a truce and that war lurked somewhere in the background. It lay like a thunder cloud on the mountains from which a host of Indians, led by resolute chieftains, had swept down with fire and spear like an avalanche, to purge their native island of foreign conquerors and to punish their tribal allies for having through stupidity or fear or greed allowed them to enter. The admiral's haste to fortify the new settlement was suspicious enough. Some time or other the storm would burst on them.

And then this pathless wilderness round them! The gold, too, was not lying on the beach, it had to be wrested from the earth by dint of hard toil. Was it for this they had come here? To work from dawn till dusk! In addition there was the prostrating climate, the unaccustomed diet, and a horrible disease the Spaniards had either received as a nuptial gift from the native women or had brought to the island themselves. Their physicians were puzzled by it. Had the admiral not grossly deceived the crews and enticed them into a hopeless wilderness, where every inch of ground had to be bought with blood and toil, where their heads would one day perhaps adorn the door-post of an Indian cabin, or their limbs stew in a cannibal's pot? Was it gold at all that had been sieved from the sand of the rivers? Fermin Cado, the goldsmith, ought surely to know! But quite unblushingly he burst into jeering laughter when he was asked about that and spat out: "Not worth speaking about! It's a regular swindle! And if there is, perhaps, really a vein of gold anywhere, we won't be allowed to get near it!" And Cado went about a great deal with the Auditor of Accounts, Bernal Diaz de

Pisa—he was a royal official and in good standing at the Court—he too, it might be assumed, didn't think much of the whole affair! Something was on foot in that quarter, and one day the word went round: Cado, Diaz and a dozen others were arrested for incitement to mutiny. The draft of a petition for the redress of grievances in Cado's handwriting convicted them: they intended to seize one or all of the ships by force, return to Spain and justify their flight by accusing the admiral of fraudulent exaggerations and delusive promises. Columbus ordered Pisa to be put in irons on one of the ships, meaning to send him to Spain for trial at the next opportunity; the others were only mildly punished. This incident, however, led him to have the guns and all the munitions taken to the flagship, where he could depend on his crew.

The unhealthy climate had thrown even the admiral on a sick-bed. Not until the 12th March was he able to set out with a force of 400 men, mostly cross-bowmen and horsemen, towards the south, in order to establish a point of support there. The expedition made severe demands on the men; what Hojeda with his mounted men had accomplished easily—the ascent to the plateau that led to the mountains of Cibao—meant tremendous exertion for foot-soldiers with their heavy packs. They had first to open up the path step by step. In this pioneer work the hidalgos took the lead, setting the men a good example and taking their turn with them. That led to this first road being called the "Hidalgos' Pass." The plateau, a paradise of tropical luxuriance, was densely populated and the natives everywhere proved peaceable and hospitable, once they got over their first terror. But there was not the slightest sign of the glories of Marco Polo here in Hispaniola, which Columbus still imagined was Cipango; nothing could be seen in any direction but wretched huts and naked savages!

The force advanced unmolested with flags flying, drums beating, uniforms flashing and weapons clattering, across the whole of the Vega Real or Royal Plain, and occupied the first range of the mighty chain of mountains which bounded the plateau. Columbus neither saw nor heard anything of Caonabo, the lord of these mountains. On one of these heights, eighteen hours' march from Isabella, Columbus now built a powerful fort, protected by its situation from a surprise attack. It had a garrison of 56 men under the command of Pedro Margarite,

a man on whose discretion and capability he could depend. The business of the garrison was to search for gold or to acquire it by barter. But no sooner had he returned to Isabella on the 29th March than a messenger arrived from the new Fort St. Thomas with the alarming news that the Indians in the vicinity were inclined to be hostile. In reality the garrison themselves had again harassed and provoked the aborigines by their spoliation and brutal coercion. The fate of their comrades in La Navidad had not yet made the Spaniards more cautious.

Columbus at once sent the commander a reinforcement, and then threw all the healthy men he could spare into the area exposed to danger. On the 9th April Alonzo de Hojeda led a force of about 400 men by the road already known to him, and when he learned on the way that three Spaniards had been robbed by the red-skins on the march to St. Thomas, he dealt out summary justice to the Indians. He ordered one of the robbers to have his ears cut off in the public square and the cacique with his family to be escorted to Isabella. Columbus was so incensed at this occurrence that he wanted to put the prisoners to death, in accordance with the laws of their own country; for theft—except of articles of food—was regarded by them as the most heinous crime. But the persistent pleading and promises of a neighbouring cacique induced him to let mercy prevail, and he set the miscreants free. Just as they went off, a lancer came galloping in from Fort St. Thomas. On his way to the same village he had found five Spaniards held as hostages by the natives, but a horde of several hundred Indians had taken to flight at the mere sight of his horse and had liberated the Spaniards. Still the admiral did not regret his conciliatory action. His subordinates would have to learn to come to an understanding with the aborigines, and if the commandant of St. Thomas followed the instructions he had sent to him by Hojeda it was unlikely that such incidents would occur again, or, if they did, they would be dealt with sharply. The victorious repulse of several hundred red-skins by a single lancer showed how easily these timid natives could be held in check, if need should arise. The main thing was that Pedro Margarite should succeed in keeping those natives who were still well-intentioned in a friendly temper, so long as Columbus himself was away from the island. It was high time now that the proper business

of the expedition should be taken in hand—the continuation of the voyage of discovery. Accordingly Columbus appointed his brother Diego as his substitute during the time of his absence, and four men, one of whom was Father Buyl, to act as his advisers. Then he sailed westwards on the 24th April 1494 with three caravels.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### IN THE QUEEN'S PRIVATE CHAMBER

THE royal palace in Barcelona at the end of May 1494.

QUEEN ISABELLA: Have you anything else to lay before us, Coloma?

PRIVATE SECRETARY COLOMA: The memorial of his excellency the viceroy of India—dated January of this year. Antonio de Torres delivered it at the end of March. He has been here for some days and he pleads most urgently for the settlement of this matter. Three ships with provisions for the company in the colony of Isabella lie in Cadiz ready to sail. He thinks he cannot be responsible for any further postponement of his departure. He has the gravest anxiety for the fate of the admiral and his men.

ISABELLA: He can be at ease and leave the responsibility with us. Moreover, we have commissioned Don Bartolomeo Colon to take command of the ships. Since his return from England he has been, as you know, in our service. The unexpected arrival of his brother will rejoice the admiral. Torres is to take command of the next transport ships. . . . Was there not a letter from Dr. Chanca?

COLOMA: It is among the official records, your majesty. He entirely confirms what his excellency the viceroy has stated in the journal of his voyage, regarding the unbelievable wealth of gold in the island. Dr. Chanca is held to be a person of sober judgment and averse from all extravagance, nevertheless he is almost as enthusiastic as the admiral and chevalier Gorvalan. He writes in the same terms as Alonzo de Hojeda: on the next return of the ships a cargo of gold may be expected the like of which the world has never yet seen. His concluding words run: "Anyone who does not know me might take me for a shameless babbler who delights in exaggerations; but God is my witness that I do not stray a hairbreadth from the truth."

ISABELLA: May he prove to be right. We may require it. The Portuguese have now calmed down. Fonseca reported



yesterday that he no longer needs ships to keep watch on our noble cousin and neighbour. But there is never any rest. Those in France who have our confidence assert that King Charles in a few months will throw his army into Italy and that he means unconditionally to take possession of Naples, without regard to our opposition. What will be the result no one can foresee. Our war-fleet is mobilized—we need every possible craft. It is an inopportune time for us to send three ships to Hispaniola. But it will certainly have to be done. Have you written out the separate details of the memorial?

COLOMA: At your majesty's pleasure. They only require your majesty's decision with regard to each individual point.

ISABELLA: Let us hear them.

COLOMA: The admiral begs to be excused for not being able to send a larger amount of gold. His men were ill as a result of the climate, unaccustomed food and overwork, and he could not afford to miss the favourable period for sending back the twelve ships.

ISABELLA: He has done well. Make a note of the answers.

COLOMA: The misfortune in La Navidad he ascribes to the imprudence of the garrison and to their harsh and irritating treatment of the natives. He requires fresh meat for the sick men. The men in good health are employed in the founding of the new colony of Isabella, building the church, the house and a wall for the protection of the munitions, etc. Then he intends to proceed into the interior of the island, establish a fort there also, and undertake the collecting of gold on a large scale.

ISABELLA: That is well; he deals prudently.

COLOMA: The sick men are in no danger, the admiral reports; moreover, he has had to take to bed himself. But everything depends on proper diet, he says. He has ordered grain to be sown, also sugar-cane and vines to be planted, and he promises a splendid harvest from them, judging from the rapidity with which everything grows there. The field-workers are mostly all sick and the scanty live-stock has become so emaciated by the hardships of the voyage that it is fit for very little. The horses especially have suffered. For that reason he requires in the meantime fresh supplies of wheat, barley and oats. The stock of flour has run low. The Spaniards have such healthy appetites——

ISABELLA: Let us pass from that. If the land is as fertile as he says it is, let him plant all he can. Fonseca is charged to provide all that is necessary.

COLOMA: The admiral complains about the contractors for the wine; most of the casks from Seville were damaged and most of the wine had leaked out.

ISABELLA: Who are these fellows? Fonseca must see to that! They must reimburse the damages and all the expenses. If need be let their property be impounded! Do not forget that!

COLOMA: In Isabella sheep, lambs, more of them female than male, calves and goats are needed. And some young horses, for there are no draught-animals there except asses. Also bacon and salt meat. In order to lose no time the admiral had authorized Torres, in the event of your majesty's being away from home, to put on deposit with a merchant in Seville the gold he brought with him as security until payment should be made by the Treasurer, and to order up to that amount all he required—wheat, wine, rice, sugar, almonds, raisins and honey, which has all been used up—I imagine he regales the natives with this. Drugs, too, have been running short; that is the most grievous calamity. The admiral is very urgent about everything; two caravels should set sail no later than in May.

ISABELLA: Fonseca, it seems, has not taken the admiral's urgency in good part? He is cross with him. So the transport should have been on the way long ere this! Then surely everything is now well advanced? If anything is still lacking, let it be procured at once!

COLOMA: Language forms a great difficulty in coming to an understanding with the natives. The admiral has therefore sent in two of his ships some men, boys, women and girls in order that they may learn Spanish, and indeed for that purpose he has selected only cannibals whom he ordered to be captured on various well-populated islands. He hopes that their remoteness from their native land will break them of their barbarous custom of eating human flesh, and make them inclined to accept Christianity. He asks that they should be lodged with trustworthy persons and be better treated than is customary with slaves in Spain, so that they may be willing to be taught.

ISABELLA: Fonseca will have provided for the accommodation of these people. Let the admiral be informed of this. He is quite right; everything possible ought to be done and every

means ought to be used to convert these natives to our holy religion, even those from Hispaniola.

COLOMA: For that reason the admiral proposes that ship-owners should send thither on their own account as much cattle as possible; he would then pay for them with slaves like these, who can easily be captured on the cannibal islands. It is precisely those savages who are vigorous and intelligent, in contrast to the natives of Hispaniola. They will make excellent domestic servants, and they can only be tamed and converted by being transplanted from their present surroundings. A government official must, of course, always accompany these ships; they are not to be allowed to land anywhere else than on Isabella. That alone will be the centre for the collection and delivery of the slaves.

ISABELLA: The proposal is worth considering. We shall give our decision on it at a later time. Any of these dangerous people who are here at present are to be treated in a kindly but cautious manner. Perhaps the admiral is able to make other proposals regarding the work of conversion.

COLOMA: The admiral requests that only thoroughly trustworthy persons and zealous Christians should be sent to the colony.

ISABELLA: Torres had already delivered a speech on this subject, so far as I recollect. We are fully informed about this. The admiral shall be satisfied.

COLOMA: Then follows a list of the names of officers and men, whom his excellency the viceroy proposes for promotion and reward.

ISABELLA: There is time for that. Hand me the list.

COLOMA: A second complaint has still to be dealt with: the horse-dealers of Granada, the admiral asserts, according to their tender, should have supplied horses that were in the best condition, but when they embarked them, after they had received payment for them, they had foisted off wretched jades . . .

ISABELLA: Can that be possible? Such rascality is shocking! Fonseca shall see to it that these knaves are severely punished!

COLOMA: The admiral further suggests that, in order to lessen the expenses, in addition to absolute necessities the ships should carry a few other things, such as better linen, shoes and also small delicacies like preserves, etc., which the men would willingly buy with their pay.

ISABELLA: Can the admiral not descend to more minute details? But he thinks of everything! Fonseca shall look into this matter.

COLOMA: The admiral finally asks for expert gold-washers and miners.

ISABELLA: He shall have the best of these! We shall write about this to our mining administration at Amaldén. . . . Is that all? Complete the answers on every point raised. We shall sign them. And see that Fonseca makes no delay. The admiral is perfectly right. The ships must set off as soon as possible. . . . Enough for today!

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### ON THE QUEST OF THE GRAND KHAN

THE success that had been lacking on the first voyage was now to be retrieved. Where was Cathay, Marco Polo's land of golden roofs? Where was the residence of the Grand Khan, to whom the letters of the Spanish monarchs were addressed? Where, finally, was the beginning of the Asiatic mainland proper, of which Cuba must be the eastern spur?

On the 29th April 1494 Columbus saw the extreme end of this supposed peninsula lying before him. He had given it the name of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet—Alpha and Omega—both the beginning and the end of India. But on this occasion he did not steer north-west, the course he had taken on his first return voyage, but turned to the left across the channel and then sailed straight along the coast of Cuba in a westerly direction. The natives who were met here were of the same gentle disposition as the subjects of Guacanagari when their acquaintance was first made, and they were just as naked, poor and unassuming. Gold they did not possess—that was to be found farther south! And this information was given so unfailingly that Columbus came to a sudden resolve and turned to the left with his ships straight into the Caribbean Sea, or the Sea of Antilles.

No later than two days afterwards an unknown mountainous island lay before him. Was this the promised gold coast? In any case he had to land, as one of the ships had sprung a leak. But when the flotilla drew near the shore long canoes shot out from all directions, manned by aborigines painted black and decorated with feathers. They brandished their spears shouting loud war-cries, sent a hail of arrows over the heads of the sailors and seemed seriously of a mind to prevent by force a landing on their coast. Not until the Spaniards defended themselves with cross-bow and musket did they gain a free path. On the shore, however, in order to remain unmolested they had first of all to let loose one of the mastiffs they had brought with them, and even

this brave clan took to their heels in terror to escape from the dog.

Next day the Indians belonging to the friendly territory made their appearance, and the Spaniards got on so well with them that when the ships set sail again on the 8th, a train of canoes followed them on the voyage westwards and one of the Indians, despite the lamentation of his relatives, wanted to accompany them at any cost. The name of the island was Jamaica. It was beautiful and fertile, as were nearly all these islands, but it also did not seem to form part of the land of Marco Polo; there was no gold to be discovered.

Columbus therefore turned north again from the north-west corner of Jamaica and soon found himself in a dangerous labyrinth of the coral reefs, cliffs, sand-banks and small islands that stud wide stretches on the south coast of Cuba. These could only be the seven thousand islands, which according to Marco Polo and Mandeville lie east of Cathay. With a constant struggle against wind, wave and current he groped his way through these perilous "Queen's Gardens," as he called them, advancing along the coast, and when on the 3rd June some natives told him that this island had no end, and that farther west a mighty prince named Magon ruled (again, surely Marco Polo spoke of a province of Mangi), Columbus was convinced that he had before him in tangible nearness the goal he had so ardently sought and had hitherto failed to reach—the kingdom of the Grand Khan. Certainly up to this point not the slightest tincture of a highly developed civilization could be noticed, for the natives, their cabins and their customs still remained the same, and nowhere did he see golden roofs gleaming in the sunshine. But everything that Columbus imagined he could gather from the gabble of the natives was forced to fit in with his preconceived ideas. In the province of Magon or Mangon, it was said, the people wore clothes. What was the reason for this? Because they had tails, for an Indian never wore clothes except to conceal some bodily defect. Mandeville too had told about people with tails who inhabited this part of the world. And one day a sailor returned in a fever of excitement from a hunting expedition on the coast: he had caught sight of about thirty men all clad in white like monks, but armed with long javelins—one of them had come up to him—then the bold Spaniard had taken to his heels in terror. It was undoubtedly nothing more than a flock

of long-legged white herons, which often hold up their long necks and beaks as erect as darts, and on that account look so like sentries that they were afterwards called "soldados" by the colonists. As Alexander von Humboldt relates, an entire city in Venezuela, Angostura on the Orinocco, not very far from Cuba, was thrown into the utmost consternation and dismay when a similar flock of "soldados" appeared on a hill-crest. They were taken for the advanced guard of wild Indians, and calmness was restored only when the herons rose up into the air. The fertile imagination of Columbus, however, linked with these mysterious, monkish figures the old traditions of a Christian priest-king John, whose realm the Portuguese also sought somewhere in the East from the time of their earliest voyages of discovery. Since the coast of Cuba beyond the newly discovered island of Pinos took a bend again towards the south-west, Columbus was absolutely certain that this must be the mainland and could not be any great distance from the gold Chersonese of the ancients (Malacca in Farther India) and that therefore he could either sail back to Spain from there through the "Gulf of the Ganges" round Africa, or reach the Mediterranean again by land through Asia by way of Jerusalem. Columbus was never able to free himself even afterwards from these fantastic conceptions, which all sprang from the fundamental mistake of underestimating the circumference of the earth.

It was all the more galling for him that he had to turn back once more when he was so near his goal. Two more days' sail round this extreme western point of Cuba—and his whole picture of the world would have become different—a new one, perhaps that of the future, for once the fact was established that Cuba was an island, his obstinate belief in its connection with the continent of Asia would have melted away. But the toilsome voyage along the coast had been so hard on his ships, his crew were so exhausted and so sick of the perpetual sailing, the stock of provisions was running so low, and his anxiety about the colony of Isabella so great, that he had to decide with a heavy heart to turn back without having trodden that continent whose existence could not be questioned, but which was obstinately determined to keep itself hidden. But before he did this every one of his eighty men had to sign a sworn deposition before the notary of the expedition declaring that he, too, was immovably convinced that Cuba was part of the continent of Asia and of the province

of Mahon or Mangi—for no island could by any possibility be so large! And they all signed it and would have signed a great deal more simply to get away from there at last and be back in Hispaniola, where, after all, they were better off than in this god-forsaken region between sand-banks and barren cliffs, with the admiral seeking someone called the Grand Khan who was a matter of utter indifference to them. This amazing document even lays down the penalties to be imposed in the event of anyone disavowing the deposition at any future time. These were the severe penalties incurred in those days by the crime of perjury—a hundred strokes with the lash and the tongue cut out! That applied certainly only to ordinary sailors and ship's boys. Perjury cost the officers only 10,000 maravedis (£10). This sworn deposition, too, did not prevent another conviction being held afterwards. When Juan de la Cosa, who took part in this second voyage as pilot, completed his famous map of the world he did not hesitate to represent Cuba as an island. Meantime Cabot had landed on the American continent at Labrador and Columbus' own crew in their third voyage had reached the central American mainland at the coast of Paria—both of them still in the belief that they had the continent of Asia before them. The fact that Cuba is an island was not established with certainty until 1508, after Nicholas de Ovando had sailed round it.

So for the second time the search for the Grand Khan had to be given up. The perilous voyage through the "Queen's Gardens" was faced again. Once the admiral's ship, the *Niña*, ran aground on a sand-bank and was badly damaged; but Columbus could not linger among those precipitous and barren cliffs. He even managed to get the damaged ship to the coast of Cuba, and on the 7th July he sailed into a river where a longer stay was made for the purpose of repairing the *Niña*. There, too, the natives were friendly and hospitable.

On the 18th July the three ships lay off Cape Cruz. But as they could make no headway against the wind, Columbus crossed over again to Jamaica in order to sail entirely round this island. Intercourse with the inhabitants was now carried on in the friendliest manner, and when Columbus, after four weeks of strenuous struggle with wind and weather, had reached the eastern point of Jamaica, a cacique who had been allured by the interpreter's tales about the wonder-land of Spain and its supernatural power, announced that he was ready to follow the admiral



to his native land, and was with great difficulty persuaded to wait until the next time.

The flotilla now arrived at the south coast of Hispaniola, which had hitherto been unexplored. On the 25th August some Indians in a canoe greeted the admiral by his title, which was already quite well known down there, and at the small island of Beata, lying off the middle of the south coast of Haiti and its most southerly offshoot, he received even from the natives the reassuring news that fresh ships from Spain had sailed into Isabella. Since there were no rumours of hostile disturbances he sent nine men straight across the territory of the dreaded Caonabo to Fort St. Thomas to inform his men of the prospective arrival of the fleet. On the voyage the three ships were separated by a gale, and they did not meet again until eight anxious days had passed. The admiral's intention was to make for Porto Rico again, but he collapsed just when the little island of Mona, between Haiti and Porto Rico, came into view. He had scarcely slept for twenty-three days. All his faculties failed him, he could neither see nor hear any longer, and he fell into a profound lethargy. The ships hurried as fast as possible to Isabella, and on the 29th September he was carried ashore there quite unconscious. When he wakened again from his long swoon he looked up into the anxious face of his brother Bartolomeo.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE LORD OF THE GOLDEN HOUSE

ONLY gradually did the state of things in the colony of Isabella during the admiral's absence dawn upon him. The Indians had everywhere risen in arms. The general in command of the troops, Pedro Margarite, instead of pacifying them had turned the most peaceable natives into deadly foes. Then he had abandoned everything and on his own authority had gone back with a troop of discontented hidalgos to the Spanish ships that Bartolomeo Colon had brought to Isabella. And the Apostolic Vicar Father Buyl had joined him and had also left his post!

Margarite had been commissioned by the admiral to push on further from St. Thomas in the direction of the mountains and to take possession of as many as possible of the gold mines in Cibao. This commission could not be carried out without an encounter with the cacique Caonabo, the "Lord of the Golden House," which is the meaning of his Indian name. For that reason he was to endeavour by every expedient of guile or force he could employ to lay hands on Caonabo, but above all to keep his rear open and therefore to cultivate friendly and peaceable relations with the dense population of the King's Plain. Instead of applying himself to this perilous undertaking he had quartered in these very villages of the fertile King's Plain the whole force of four or five hundred men under his command, and the soldiery so ruthlessly exploited the kind-hearted hospitality of the Indians, that the latter, unaccustomed to hardship and toil and perfectly content with what nature so amply provided, were unable in the end to furnish enough to feed so many mouths. The Spaniards with their vigorous appetites stripped them bare, and when the Indians no longer gave willingly what was demanded of them, the invaders took it by force. They pillaged as though they were in an enemy country, violated the women, defrauded the natives in barter and acted like despotic lords. Complaints to the commandant were made in vain. The representative of the viceroy, his brother Diego Colon, and his advisers gave him

warning, but he considered it beneath his dignity to take orders from them. As a scion of ancient Spanish nobility and a special favourite of the king he regarded himself as the head of the colony, and when he visited Isabella he treated the representative Diego, that foreign upstart, as though he had no existence for him. And on that point of honour the majority of the Spanish hidalgos agreed with him. Columbus for a long time now had lost favour with them because, owing to his need for men, he made no distinction in rank. Very few of them knew anything of work outside their military profession, and every hand was needed for the consolidation of the new colony. Certainly it flattered them to pose as shining examples, as they did at the "Hidalgos' Pass"; but to work when they were ordered—that offended their pride. Although they did not dare yet to give a direct refusal to Columbus himself, they took revenge for this in their treatment of his representative, who with his mild disposition was perfectly helpless to cope with their insubordination. They followed their commander's example and found a powerful ally in the Apostolic Vicar. Possessing full authority from the Pope, Buyl felt himself under no obligation to give submission for the sake of the common weal.

At the same time the colony was in such a perilous state that famine would soon have nipped all internal dissension in the bud. The provisions that Bartolomeo Colon had brought had quickly run short as a result of wastefulness and arbitrary transactions. The colony's own harvest was scanty; indeed, to begin with, only tentative experiments were made with the fertile soil. The necessary labour was wanting for extensive cultivation of the land. Everyone waited anxiously for the next transport from Spain.

The natives were not ignorant of this situation. Caonabo had his spies everywhere and he had even been seen quite near to the colony. What drew him and his fellow-countrymen with a demoniac power of attraction was the sound of the church bell. This completely fascinated him, and had the commandant been more on the alert he would have long since mastered this chieftain, in whom the resistance of the whole population was concentrated and who, in addition, possessed the gold mines which Margarite was to acquire. But the commandant lay with his army in the King's Plain, and by his unbridled excesses had contracted virulent diseases, for the cure of which he was very anxious to get back

to Spain. Fierce encounters had already taken place in the territory occupied by the military rabble. If the Indians could not venture to meet the Spaniards in the open field, they took their revenge wherever they found an opportunity. The chief Guatiguana had cruelly put to death ten Spaniards whom he had captured and had set fire to a hospital, in which all the fifty patients had perished. Then he laid siege to the little fort Magdalena, which Margarite had build in the vicinity.

Meanwhile Caonabo, who had gradually stirred up the whole island, assembled an army of 10,000 Indians to bring about the same fate for Fort St. Thomas as befel La Navidad. He was the lord of the mountains, the lord, too, of the treasure of gold which reposed in them. The struggle for this treasure, as the shrewd Indian had foreseen from the start, was on the part of the natives a fight for existence against the foreign conquerors, who had robbed them of their gold, their liberty and their lives.

But he found in St. Thomas an opponent who was his equal, Alonzo de Hojeda. He exercised military discipline, and the hope of a surprise attack was disappointed. The fort had an excellent strategic position, and to defend it to the last man was a task quite to the liking of its present commandant. For thirty days he held the fort with his fifty men against a countless host of Indians, who suffered immense losses and in the end lost heart. They were unfamiliar with military operations. Caonabo had to raise the siege. Hojeda's valour in the defence of the fort, and in his sudden sallies from which in some mysterious fashion he always escaped without injury, won the Indian's warmest admiration. But this was not the end of his struggle against the invaders. On the contrary Caonabo set to work to unite all the tribes of the island in a regular confederation. And his summons was everywhere obeyed—one chief alone held back, the loyal Guacanagari.

When Margarite realized what had been the result of his irresponsible action, and saw that affairs had got beyond his control, he made a sudden resolve. The soldier and nobleman preferred to betake himself to Spain along with his confederates, immediately before the return of the admiral, whom he could not very well face any longer. He could justify the step he took only by representing the distracted and neglected state of the colony to the king in such a way that the whole blame would

fall on the absent admiral, and for this purpose he had in Father Buyl a dependable and crafty ally.

Such then was the situation in the colony when Columbus returned to Isabella, a half-dead man, of whose recovery the physicians were doubtful. But his powerful physique enabled him to overcome the effects of his over-exertion, and when he had in some degree recovered, his first task was to make reparation for the damage that had been done. Fortunately, too, in the beginning of October four ships came from Spain under the command of the loyal Antonio de Torres and relieved him from immediate need. From the letters sent to him by the king and queen (dated 16th August) he learned that all his requests up to that time had been granted and that there was no less eagerness than before for the development of the whole enterprise.

What pleased him most was the promise to carry out his suggestion of setting up a regular trade between Spain and the colony, and the decision to send a ship every month from Cadiz to Hispaniola. Here his only trouble was to know what he should offer in return for these sacrifices. It was bound to make a bad impression if there were nothing but perpetual appeals for reinforcements and the ships then returned home empty. No opinion had yet been expressed with regard to his proposals for a systematic slave-trade. The output of gold had not increased, thanks to the undutifulness of the absconding general-commandant. Margarite and Buyl were now on the high sea, and it was to be feared that after the Court had heard their story its mood would suddenly change. Consequently Columbus ordered all the gold that could be got hold of to be brought to the ships which Torres had to take home again, and he sent with him as legal adviser his brother Diego, who was thoroughly familiar with all that had happened during the summer. He now appointed his brother Bartolomeo as his representative with the title of Adelantado. Bartolomeo was made of sterner stuff than Diego, an experienced navigator, an excellent cartographer, a discreet administrative official, adroit and practical, energetic and determined, often rather rough and inconsiderate, not troubled with sensitiveness, less of a visionary than Columbus, less go-ahead in forming and carrying out new schemes, but as if made for keeping a firm hold on what had once been won and using it to the best advantage. After his unpleasant experiences with Margarite, who had disappointed the boundless confidence he placed in him,

Columbus felt that his brother was the only one on whom he could rely without reserve.

In the first place he had to make an attempt himself to mollify the Indians. Quite unexpectedly Guacanagari had presented himself to the admiral to assure him of his lasting friendship and to warn him against the machinations of Caonabo. His statements only confirmed the admiral in his view of what was needed to be done after the events of the past months—there could be no peace until Caonabo was rendered harmless; the “lord of the golden house” would not hand over his domain of his own free will. But if the source of the gold did not begin soon to gush freely the work of discovery would come to a standstill and his enemies would triumph.

The admiral succeeded in reconciling the inhabitants of the King's Plain with surprising dispatch. Their chief, the cacique Guarionex had little liking for warfare, although there was an immemorial tradition in his family to the effect that “clothed and bearded men” would exterminate his people. He allowed the Spaniards to go to the relief of Fort Magdalena, which was besieged by his vassal Guatiguana, and to build a new one in his own district. He even accepted the interpreter Diego as a son-in-law. The admiral's principal opponent, Caonabo, however, lay hidden in his mountain recesses, waiting for a better opportunity of striking a blow at the Spaniards. He had to be forestalled.

Hojeda was the right man for this undertaking. In the Moorish wars he had had bouts with far more venturesome foes, and had grown familiar with all their ruses in fighting. Bravery was of no use against an enemy who for the nonce refused to appear; therefore stratagem had to be employed.

Hojeda with ten resolute men rides through the King's Plain to the mountains to track Caonabo to his lair. The ride up hill and down dale takes them sixty hours. At length they reach his residence, an unusually large settlement, and the cacique receives the admiral's ambassador with the courtesy due to an enemy whose mettle, bodily strength and valour amaze even the savage. Hojeda moves here among the armed hosts of the cacique with as much assurance as though he were a guest at the house of his best friend. But that is just what he wishes to be, and the admiral too! They recognise Caonabo's power, he is lord of the whole island—hence the importance the admiral attaches to his friend-

ship. And he is willing to give a high price for it—the most valuable thing he possesses: he offers the church bell of Isabella in return for an alliance between the Spaniards and Caonabo!

The church bell, the ringing marvel of Isabella—it is going to belong to him—he can hang it among his palm-trees and even make it speak, at any time and as often as he likes! The payment offered is a large one—larger than anything the cacique had ever imagined—he cannot resist the temptation! Yes, the church bell—when he receives that there will be peace between him and the admiral! The Spaniards are hospitably entertained—Caonabo is proud of his new friend—he takes him about and comes to an excellent understanding with him. . . . But though the bell can ring, it cannot fly, and it is heavy. Caonabo will have to fetch it, there is no other way. The chief understands that and very soon he gets ready to march off. But behind him come the Indians, his retainers, hundreds of them, thousands of them! Is Hojeda going to lead them all to Isabella?

Why so many? he asks. The bell is heavy, says Caonabo, and a prince like him does not set out without an imposing retinue.

Hojeda dare not let anything be noticed. He is jovial and in high spirits. But he is thinking—all these thousand savages in Isabella!—it would mean sheer suicide—does Caonabo intend to fool him by a counter stratagem? There is only one way out of the difficulty, and Hojeda is already prepared to take it.

The chieftain strides with great dignity alongside his friend's horse. What is it that is always gleaming and clattering at the saddle-bow? Chains shining like silver and furnished with handcuffs. The chief cannot take his eyes off them. Hojeda explains to him: That is a royal decoration; our princes in Spain put it on when they perform ceremonial dances at high festivals; it is sacred; it comes direct from heaven, it is a "turey." Caonabo understands that; every object entitled to divine worship is a "turey."

This "turey" continues to engross the chieftain's attention. May he be allowed to touch it? Hojeda wards him off. Only princes are permitted to wear it, and they must put it on in the prescribed manner. Certainly, Caonabo is also a prince, a great prince and a friend of the king of Spain. Perhaps he may be allowed to wear it,

The horsemen with their Indian host encamp beside a river. It is open country and a valley stretches in front of them. Hojeda rattles the gleaming steel chains. The chieftain's eyes stray from the "turey" to the face of his friend. Will he allow him? Hojeda nods assent. But he must first bathe in the river—only then will he be worthy to wear the regal ornament—and after that Hojeda himself will present the mighty cacique to his Indians in all the glory of this lustrous silver. Caonabo will sit beside him on the horse and ride with Hojeda through the widespread encampment of his admiring subjects!

Hojeda himself puts the chains round the cacique's wrists—the manacles close with a snap—Caonabo is lifted on to the horse—till then no Indian has ever ventured to approach this animal—but their chief is not afraid, he sits securely in front on the pommel of the saddle supported by Hojeda's hand. The Indians are wild with excitement. Hojeda takes the cacique with the foreign "turey" through the rows of Indians, wider and wider grows the circuit of the ten horsemen, still wider—they are already close to the edge of the forest, they disappear behind some bushes—will they never come out again?

Vigorous hands have seized the confiding cacique: Not a sound, or you are a dead man! Now they are off, as fast as the steeds can gallop—then no Indian can keep up with them! And like a hurricane the troop of horsemen rush through the valley, through other hamlets, where the natives fly terrified in all directions, with no idea of what shot past them—uphill, downhill—with an occasional short halt in the forest—through the King's Plain to Isabella!

Caonabo is in custody! He will no longer be a danger! He is imprisoned with his glittering gyves in the admiral's own house—and every day the bell rings close beside him, and laughs at his folly and his trust in the Spaniards. If the admiral enters his cell he makes no movement, does not lift his eyes, gives no answers. But Hojeda—that is his man! He rises in his presence, and his eyes shine. Stratagem too is valour—and he is the only one who has ever got the better of him.

Caonabo lies in chains for a year-and-a-half. His proud spirit is unbroken. He demolished La Navidad and slaughtered all the Spaniards there, and he boasts of that. He had a right to do it—if only he could get at the admiral as well!—



Columbus takes him with him when he sails to Spain in the summer of 1496. The cacique dies before the arrival in Cadiz. The chains clank till the last moment, and the bell of the church in Isabella rings and laughs in the far distance across the sea.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### INGOTS OF GOLD

CAONABO'S capture accomplishes what he himself could not have done so quickly—the whole of Hispaniola rises in rebellion. A brother of the chief leads an army of seven thousand men against the Spaniards' main point of support, Fort St. Thomas. Hojeda has not the slightest intention of waiting for him behind his entrenchments, but attacks the undisciplined hordes with his twenty mailed horsemen and causes such terrible carnage among them that they flee back again to their mountains. But Indians stream in from all quarters to fight against the Spanish thralldom, and on the 25th March 1495 a great battle is fought in the King's Plain. The Indians fight with javelins, arrows and clubs. These are countered by cross-bows accurately aimed, and by arquebuses that spit death and destruction over a wide area. Wherever Hojeda appears with his small troop of lancers the bravest chieftain cannot hold his ground. But most terrible of all now are the dogs that fasten on the heels of the naked fugitives with furious yelps, pull them down to the ground and tear them to pieces. Guacanagari with a meagre handful of his subjects assists his ally the admiral and witnesses the ruthless cruelties under which countless numbers of his fellow-countrymen die a harrowing death.

The insurgents are utterly vanquished. Now the Spaniards are really the masters. A period of spoliation and systematic slavery begins. As far as the might of the victors extends—newly built forts stretch farther and farther out—each Indian over fourteen years has to deliver every three months a specified amount of gold-dust, worth about £3, the caciques half a calabash. The tax-payer receives as a receipt a copper token which is hung round the neck like a dog-collar. Anyone seen without this is arrested, reprimanded, or compelled to work in the fields. Thus the Spaniards turn the gold-mines of the country to good account, without possessing them yet and working them; meantime every one of them is a soldier. The Indians, unaccustomed to hard

work, have to toil and slave in order to pay the tax, which is ruthlessly exacted. In districts where no gold can be got, such as the King's Plain, a quarter tax of 25 pounds of cotton is imposed. The cacique there offers in payment of the tax to sow as much grain as will supply the whole of Spain. But the admiral has no use for that. Grain fields in Hispaniola would not impress the Spanish government, he could not exhibit them in Spain; imports of grain would only lower prices and rouse discontent among the Spanish peasantry. He has to show gold—that alone pays! With that alone can he close the lips of his enemies at Court, who are no doubt busy just now. Gold alone can assure him of the monarchs' favour. And he needs this if he is to carry on his voyages of discovery and fulfil his promises. The expeditions and the colony require considerable supplies, which his enemies will represent as extravagant expenditure if he does not repay them twice over with gold, for the enterprise has to finish with a large profit; on no other condition will it be maintained. He reckons the possible yearly output of gold just now at 120 tons; an immense amount for those days. But it is not sufficient by a long way for a crusade to the Holy Land. Columbus has himself become the thrall, the slave of his own undertaking.

The Indians become desperate under this intolerable burden. The measure for the tax of gold dust is one of those little bells that have so charmed the Indians with their delightful tinkle. That makes their forced labour all the more galling. Again and again rebellion flares up and is suppressed by force. The natives go on hunger-strike; they destroy their own fields and flee to inaccessible mountains where they perish in great numbers. But nothing they can do is of any avail. Fresh ships bring provisions; the invaders cannot be starved out, and if they are asked timidly when they are likely to go back to their heaven, the only answer is a brutal laugh. One or two of them may sail home—but others always come in their place. Even Guacanagari himself is not spared the payment of the tribute; behind the admiral's back he is no better treated than the open foes. He is outlawed by his fellow-countrymen. He, too, in the end hides himself somewhere among the mountains and perishes there in misery.

In the ceaseless battles not only are the Indians slaughtered wholesale, large numbers of them are also made prisoners. There are neither men to guard them nor provisions to feed them, and to set them free again will mean a renewal of the fighting. The

natives of Hispaniola were certainly not cannibals, but like all savages they were idolaters, and so long as they were subject to the magic spell of their "tureys" and under the influence of their medicine men and their priests, their Christianity was no more than a veneer. When Antonio de Torres returned to Spain with his four ships on the 24th February 1495, he took five hundred natives with him who were to be converted and educated and sold as slaves. They were not even Caribs, but prisoners of war who had been captured at the last siege of St. Thomas—not only idolaters, therefore, but also rebels, enemies of the Spanish colonists, allies of Caonabo. . . .

Slaves provided the supply of labour in the ancient world, which in respect of culture surpassed the Middle Ages. This usage prevailed among all warlike nations who were allowed with impunity to enslave weaker foes. The Moors on the north coast of Africa dealt in "white slaves," the Christians of the Mediterranean Sea in brown and black. Those nations that acquired colonies, used their inhabitants in the main as articles of commerce. It can be proved that slave-markets existed in Lisbon and Seville in the fourteenth century, and they were certainly there much earlier than that. Natives of the Canary Islands were put up for sale there, and also negroes from Senegambia, for whom the Moors ransomed slaves of their own race from the Spaniards or the Portuguese and from the Moors themselves. Prince Henry the Navigator, too, the founder of the Portuguese colonial empire, saw no possibility of coming to an understanding with savage tribes unless he resorted to kidnapping, and this political necessity became a profitable business, which put the colonies in a flourishing condition. The wealth of the Portuguese merchants who acquired the trade-monopoly for Africa came in part from this source. At the conquest of Malaga in 1487 eleven thousand Moors fell into the hands of the Spanish victors. They had fought like heroes, but they were unbelievers, for whom there was no mercy. There were some who advised that they should be all slaughtered forthwith—eleven thousand persons! Queen Isabella granted them their life—the life of slaves. A third of them were taken to Africa in exchange for Christian captives; the second third were sold to meet the expenses of the war; the last third were given away as presents. A hundred Moorish soldiers, the pick of the best, were sent to the Pope, who put them into his body-guard. Fifty or sixty young girls were bestowed on queens with

whom Isabella was on friendly terms. The remainder of the eleven thousand were distributed among hidalgos, officers or officials. No one thought of this proceeding as unjust, oppressive or barbarous. All colonial labour depended on this system. Even in the nineteenth century a war on this question broke out between the north and south States of North America. Here it was a purely commercial affair. At the start of the Spanish colonial activity it was also a question of religion. Tolerance was a crime. From 1481 until 1498 the Spanish Grand Inquisitor Torquemada had 8800 heretics and infidels burned at the stake. Human life was of little account. The conversion or the extermination of non-Christians was a duty. Columbus, in his diary of the 6th November 1492, commends the extirpation of the infidels, the Jews and the Moors as being particularly to the credit of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Such was the age in which Columbus lived and which he shared. He envisaged his task, in the voyages of discovery as the spread of the Gospel among the heathen, and the opening up of foreign lands to trade was the unavoidable means to that end. Men like him who cherished great ideas that could only be realised by resort to politics and commerce, were ground to powder by these powers. In his earlier years he had served as pilot on a Portuguese slave-ship. The slave-marts in Lisbon and Seville were everyday sights to him. He had been both mariner and merchant. On his first voyage he is at once confronted with the question of what was to be done with the inhabitants of the newly discovered lands. He entices the natives on board his ship and holds them captive; his work in the first instance is military, he is the soldier and conqueror; this is implied in his agreement with the Spanish crown; he needs guides and interpreters. He means to take them to Spain to learn its language and, of course, to be converted to Christianity, so that they may become serviceable intermediaries, such as he has seen in Africa. He cannot foresee that only a small minority of them will survive this sudden transplantation; the negroes of Africa were tough and they did not die of home-sickness. While he is in Cuba he deliberates: Should these people be all transported to Spain and then return to their own land as good Christians, or is it sufficient to keep them in check by a small garrison and leave the business of their conversion to the missionaries? Only two days after the discovery of Guanahani (14th

October) he mentions this as a matter of course; on his first acquaintance with these unassuming and timid people he is struck by the fact that they will make excellent domestic servants. Immediately on his forced landing at Lisbon (March 1493), in a letter to Santangel, the Minister of Finance, a shrewd business man, he discusses the possibility of a systematic slave-trade, which, to be sure, was to be restricted to those natives who were idolaters.

Until then his attitude to the natives was marked by a delicacy of feeling almost unknown in those days, he regards them as innocent, well-behaved children. He has a thoroughly humane consideration for them—for they are still without any religion and will therefore be easily converted. He does not become distrustful until he comes upon the warlike Indians of Cuba and sees human heads that rouse suspicion hanging from their cabins. If by any chance they should be idolaters, or possibly even cannibals, then he ceases to have any humane feeling for them. Hence his proposal to Santangel to trade in idolaters as slaves. Even on Hispaniola he sees no trace of any indigenous religion, and he keeps a warm place in his heart for Guacanagari and his subjects.

His eyes are not opened until the second voyage. He finds a household god in the possession of every Indian whose cabin he searches unexpectedly. The Indians hide their "tureys" from the sight of the foreigners, but they become wild with grief and fear if Dr. Chanca proposes to burn their idols. Christianity, therefore, cannot be introduced into this island either, until the native idolatry has been cleared away. And experience has taught him that this is not easy to accomplish. It can scarcely be done successfully on the spot—not to speak of the cannibals whose extermination is looked upon as a matter of course.

On the outbreak of hostilities with the natives the distinction, hitherto made between idolaters and those souls unencumbered with any religious belief, falls entirely to the ground. There can be no other fate in store for Indian prisoners of war than that of the Moors in Spain, and it is imperative for the safety of the colony that they should be removed from the land. But the colony cannot flourish without some assistance from the Indians. Even if the colonists were industrious—and very few in the town of Isabella were industrious—they will still require cheaply

paid labourers who are accustomed to the climate and the other conditions of existence. If they do not get these they will go back to Spain in the next ship. The rebellion makes it possible to obtain a supply of such labourers. Resistance deserves punishment; taxes are imposed and compulsory labour is introduced.

Columbus struggles in vain against being ground between the two millstones—here the great work of his life—yonder politics and trade, the indispensable means of accomplishing that work. One example shows how these two millstones inevitably crushed his honourable intentions. While his enemies at Court blame him for introducing serfdom among the natives, the colonists write to Spain complaining that the admiral is opposed to the subjection of the Indians to the Christians, that he panders to them in order to make himself independent by means of their support! This conflict of opinions continued to have a vital effect on all the work of colonization, and usually ended in the victory of the commercial party—the colonists and their requirements. Commerce always makes its way over dead bodies.

What did the Spanish government now say about the five hundred Indian slaves with whom Antonio de Torres arrived in Cadiz on the 16th March 1495? They were not cannibals, but they were rebels, prisoners of war and secret idolaters. On the 12th April the government ordered "the sale to take place in Andalusia, because it would be more remunerative there than anywhere else." The load of slaves apparently seemed in no way surprising to them. Columbus had prepared them for it in his memorandum of January 1494. The queen had not expressed her opinion there and then with regard to his proposal for a systematic trade in slaves carried on by private individuals under government supervision. Columbus was to make other proposals to her on that matter. But there was war in Hispaniola, and in the end she could not have given an unequivocal refusal to a commerce of this kind, otherwise the large cargo of human flesh would not have set off for Spain. The government had above all one aim in view—to sell the imported slaves at the highest figure for the needs of the exchequer.

But four days later the queen had some compunctions about the government's action. A second order was issued: "The sale is to be postponed and payment for the slaves is not to be accepted yet. Men well versed in Holy Writ, theologians and professors of canonical law, are to be consulted as to whether

such a traffic is permissible. Above all, Torres has to send her as soon as possible the admiral's letters he has with him, so that it may be learned from them why the admiral has sent these five hundred persons to Spain." Action had therefore been taken without even waiting for these letters to be delivered, so much a matter-of-course was the sale of this human cargo considered. The ultimate decision in this unexpected dilemma is unknown. But the sale of infidels into slavery had for a long time been recognised as lawful by the authorities of the Church, and, at the most, was opposed only by a few cranks, who forgot in their idealism that love of mankind when it concerned unbelievers might lead to the stake. Queen Isabella urgently requested a wealthy Florentine merchant in Seville, Bernardi, a friend of Columbus, "not to sell those Indians, nine in number, whom the admiral had sent to Europe in order to learn the language of Castile." There is nowhere any account of what happened to the rest; they were certainly not sent back, that would have caused the greatest embarrassment to the colony of Isabella as well. They were probably sent to Almagén to be trained as miners, and then perhaps they were sent home again at a later date. One or two facts may indicate the development of this problem in the following years.

When Columbus returned to Spain from his second voyage in the summer of 1496 he brought with him thirty natives in addition to the captured ringleader Caonabo. The voyage lasted so long that provisions ran short. The ship's company thereupon resolved on the 7th June "to kill and devour the slaves." The admiral rescued the natives from this outbreak of Spanish cannibalism by explaining to the men in vigorous terms that these Indians were Christians and just like themselves! The provision ships for Hispaniola came back regularly with a cargo of slaves, and this would not have been possible without the acquiescence of the government. In October of the same year Don Bartolomeo Colon, the Adelantado, sent three hundred natives all at once to Cadiz. In Portugal the slave-traffic was officially disapproved, and it was customary to provide false bills of lading for such cargoes. The Adelantado in all likelihood knew this, and holding that it applied in this case as well, he described his valuable cargo in the bill of lading as "ingots of gold"—a witicism unintentional perhaps, but certainly brutal, which is said to have created a very painful impression even at the Court.



But the cargo nevertheless was accepted. After 1499 serfdom was introduced throughout the whole of Hispaniola, and although Queen Isabella several times vigorously interposed to put an end to some of the worst practices of the slave-traders, yet it was she herself who in the end by a decree of 20th December 1505 made compulsory labour the law for the Spanish colonies. Every colonist was allowed to demand from the caciques a certain number of workers on daily wage, and to have them at his disposal for six months, afterwards for eight months, in the year; he was even permitted to send them to distant parts of the island, a regulation that opened a wide door to the worst abuses, and is chiefly to blame for the rapid depopulation of the territories discovered by Columbus. At the time this decree was issued the first viceroy, deprived then of his power, wrote to his son Diego that such an administration would ruin the Indies. He was thinking especially of Hispaniola, his favourite colony, and his prophecy was only too literally fulfilled!

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### INTERLUDE

**P**EDRO MARGARITE, who had deserted his command, and his associate Father Buyl were much too important men not to have their complaints taken into serious consideration at the Spanish Court. King Ferdinand, more distrustful and more astute than Isabella, easily made jealous by the fame of a subordinate, and moreover never strongly prepossessed by the personality of the discoverer, was not unwilling to take the opportunity of getting rid of a viceroy, whose claims had always seemed to him extravagant. Isabella's faith was not so easily shaken, and since Castile had the administration of the new colonies, she first of all entrusted its colonial Minister, Bishop Fonseca, with this unpleasant task. A reliable official was to be sent to Hispaniola, to report on the state of affairs on the island. Fonseca, to begin with, ordered the gold to be confiscated which Diego Colon, who had arrived with the ships of the two accusers, had kept back as part of his brother's stipulated payment. The queen gave orders at once that it should be handed back again. But before the official commissioned to investigate the complaints had set off, Antonio de Torres arrived with the latest despatches from Hispaniola: Columbus had returned from his second voyage of discovery after pushing on to the Asiatic mainland! This fresh success closed the lips of his enemies for the time; the sun of royal favour which had seemed to be a little clouded was now shining at its zenith, and so as to give the least possible hurt to the admiral's feelings, Isabella chose for this disagreeable mission to Hispaniola a man who had just returned from the island and whom Columbus himself had recommended for promotion and reward, a Groom of the Bedchamber, Juan Aguado. He had worked to the satisfaction of the admiral and seemed to be indebted to him. A friendly understanding appeared to be the best way of settling this ticklish business.

Aguado arrived at Isabella in the middle of October 1494 with four well-freighted ships. Columbus was absent, occupied

with the settlement of disputes somewhere in the King's Plain. Columbus had little luck in his friends. The mission of this subaltern official had turned his head; he considered himself entitled to take the viceroy's place at once. He did not even show the Adelantado, Bartolomeo Colon, his commission; on the contrary he ordered it to be read in the colony by the public crier with a flourish of trumpets. The commission was remarkably vague and was confined to these two sentences: "We send you Juan Aguado, our Groom of the Bedchamber, who will speak to you on our part. We command you to give him loyalty and credence." What could that mean? Was the viceroy deposed? The arrogant demeanour of the emissary who already put on the airs of a new master supported this assumption. Was there a change in the wind? Then the first thing was to make use of it. The most of the colonists were discontented with the admiral and his rigid régime. They now got a favourable hearing for their complaints. The natives, too, began to notice things. Was this a new admiral? Then perhaps there would be better times for them! Everyone who had a demand of any importance to make put his grievances before Aguado in the form of a legal deposition. He questioned and cross-questioned like a public prosecutor and he was soon so surfeited with accusations against his superior that he could wait no longer for the return of the culprit and resolved to go and fetch him. He missed him, however, for Columbus was already on his way back to Isabella and had just enough time to make up his mind with regard to the attitude he meant to adopt. The envoy's letter of credence either meant nothing or it meant everything.

Aguado appeared and found himself treated with notable calmness and courtesy. He was completely disappointed in his expectation of a stormy scene, which with a man of the admiral's hasty temperament might develop into what was in effect an act of lese-majesty. The royal will was an imperative command—Aguado must know what he had to do in accordance with the terms of his commission. This judicious attitude only increased the anger of the conceited interloper, it took his most effective weapons from his hands. Columbus answered all his questions and let him go about spying to his heart's desire. The officials of the colony and all who had any dealings with the viceroy were between two fires; they did not know to whom they were to adhere. This dual régime could not be borne for long.

Columbus had also heard from Aguado of an enactment which meant a manifest infringement of his agreement. The royal government on the 10th April 1495 had given free permission to any person to undertake voyages of discovery to the new countries; anyone who did so was allowed to settle in Hispaniola and, above all, to search for gold—he could keep a third of this to himself, giving two-thirds to the Crown as well as a tenth part of all his other gains. The tenth part that belonged to Columbus by his agreement had apparently been forgotten. This enactment paved the way for all sorts of fraud and abuse. Martin Pinzon also had had this idea and, as a matter of fact, the decree had been brought into force by the pressure of his brother Vicente and a few other enterprising ship-owners. Since, moreover, the arbitrary regulations of the chamberlain Aguado undermined the viceroy's authority and were utterly inconsistent with paragraph 4 of his agreement, Columbus deemed it prudent to betake himself to Spain and to look after his interests in person. By this time Aguado had drawn up his official documents and a fleet lay ready to take both the accused man and his accuser before the royal tribunal, when a sudden hurricane wrecked all the ships in the harbour of Isabella. Three of them sank with every soul on board, the others were thrown on the beach as wrecks. The *Niña* alone was left in fairly good condition. Columbus ordered it to be repaired at once and a new ship built from the wreckage of the other vessels.

During the delay he had a pleasant surprise, which at that moment he felt entitled to regard as a specially happy omen. One of his men, Miguel Diaz, had wounded a comrade in a quarrel and had taken to flight along with five others. In a village on the south coast of the island they found themselves so well treated by the natives that they resolved to stay there. The cacique of the village was a woman; she cast an eye on Miguel. He did not need much pressing and very soon he became her acknowledged spouse. After the honeymoon Miguel began to hanker for his fellow-countrymen in Isabella, but the punishment awaiting him there made it impossible for him to return. This made him moody and ill-tempered, and his Indian bride was afraid that he might run off. What could she do to keep him? The Spaniards were madly set on getting gold. Well there were gold mines near the village on the river Hayna. She took him there, and Miguel found these mines incomparably richer than any he had yet seen.

Besides the climate was healthy there, in contrast to that of the north coast. He betook himself to the admiral with the news of this find, and he could not have come at a better moment. The mines of Hayna were at once examined and Miguel's statements were confirmed. Traces of former pit-workings were even discovered. This convinced Columbus that he had found the ancient Ophir, the source of King Solomon's gold. He immediately built a fort at the village and began the exploitation of the mines. Miguel was pardoned and became a person who was much sought after, but he never grew uppish. He remained with his cacique, who was baptized at the earliest possible moment, and he had two children by her.

The two ships now set sail on the 10th March 1496, Columbus on the *Niña*, Aguado on the other vessel. The rest of the two hundred and fifty passengers were invalids, malcontents, loafers, most of them the slanderers to whom Aguado was indebted for his documentary material. Columbus who was still unfamiliar with the navigation of the ocean, took the same course as on his voyage out, and he was held up so persistently by the trade-winds and by calms that there was the threat of a famine. The crew wanted to throw the natives overboard or—eat them! It would have been difficult for the admiral to hold them much longer in check, but four days later the ships, after a long voyage of three months, at last entered the harbour of Cadiz. There three caravels lay ready to depart for Hispaniola on the 17th under the command of Pedro Alonso Niño. Four other vessels that had been sent off in January had been wrecked on the coast of Spain—disastrous tidings that boded an unpleasant reception.

There was no longer any trace of the enthusiasm with which the discoverer was acclaimed on his return from his first voyage; too many had fled home from the promised land disillusioned, ill and embittered. The gold ornaments of the Indians whom Columbus once again brought back with him dazzled the eye no longer; Indians roamed about everywhere here in Spain, although they were not so gorgeously bedizened. No one could indulge in any imaginative picture of these new countries that Columbus had discovered—they, too, would certainly be no better than the other lands which were only reviled and scoffed at. The accounts that Columbus gave of his last voyage were received once more with the incredulous smile he had known so well during his years of waiting. The gold he had brought with him was not nearly

enough to satisfy the sceptical, although it included a 'cacique's chain worth about £250, while his assurances and promises were met with an ironical or pitying shrug of the shoulders. It had been an unsuccessful speculation! It was money thrown away! The colonies would never pay! In the end he grew silent himself, and his garment was a sign of his depressed mood—a sort of monkish cowl which he wore then. It may only have been a sailor's cloak, but it was like the garb of a Franciscan monk. His friend, Bernaldez, with whom he stayed for some time in June 1496, awaiting instructions from the Court, bears witness to the fact that he wore the cord of the Franciscans round his waist.

The invitation which summoned him to the Court at Burgos on the 12th July was, contrary to expectation, extremely gracious. Columbus hastened to obey it, and he was received by Ferdinand and Isabella with such marked respect and kindness that he was at the same time both ashamed and proud. No mention was made at first of the accusations brought against him by Pedro Margarite, Father Buyl and Aguado. The government of a country, which until then had never had any foreign possessions, recognized that an enterprise of that kind involved unforeseen tasks for all who took part in it, and that the ills attending its inception were no evidence against the undertaking itself. But for the moment there was little time to spare; King Ferdinand had formed an alliance with Charles VIII, the deposed ruler of Naples; the armies of both powers were fighting in Italy; the rest of the Spanish forces were guarding the frontiers and the fleet was watching the coast. That did not hinder the equipment, with unprecedented magnificence, of an armada of a hundred vessels which convoyed the monarch's second daughter, Juana, to Flanders, where she was married in the autumn of 1496 to the Archduke Philip the Handsome, the lord of the Netherlands and heir of Emperor Maximilian I. The same fleet brought Philip's sister Margaret to Spain, where her marriage to the Crown Prince Juan was solemnized on the 3rd April 1497. Juan's eldest sister, Isabella, was immediately afterwards married to the king of Portugal, and his younger sister, Catalina, to Arthur, Prince of Wales. In the autumn of 1497, after the sudden death of the crown prince Juan, these marriage connections became the foundation of the Spanish-Hapsburg dynasty, which decided the fate of Europe in the following century.

That armada of a hundred caravels with crews numbering

twenty thousand had suffered severe losses through shipwreck both on the outward and on the return voyage, and the nuptial celebrations made so great a demand on the State's exchequer that Columbus had to wait patiently for nearly a year before his plan for a third voyage of discovery was taken in hand. It was plain that the authorities were anxious to keep the admiral for the present away from Hispaniola. But certainly his impatient pressure also led to the discussion of the complaints brought against him. This is seen from the account of his third voyage, in which he expressly takes his opponents to task, referring to the sacrifices Portugal had made for its colony of Guinea, and even to the enterprises of Solomon, Alexander the Great and Nero, and showing the short-sightedness of those who croaked about the ill-success of new colonies because ships' cargoes of gold were not immediately forthcoming. "They do not reflect," he writes with dauntless pride, "that there are people loafing about your majesties' Court, without anything notable to their credit, who have amassed more money in a single year than all my enterprises have hitherto cost!" And he gives here what is, in some degree, an official record of his conferences with the queen during this year of waiting. "The more I enlarged on these things, the stronger was the opposition to my proposals, without any consideration being given to the results already achieved by my discoveries throughout the world, for all Christendom rings with the fame of your majesties, who had the courage to undertake this enterprise. But your majesties smiled at that prattle, calmed me and assured me that you would not put any trust or credence in anyone who spoke evil of my work."

Meanwhile it was also plainly seen already that the arbitrary licence given to private individuals to make voyages of discovery in the West had resulted in serious evils. It was rescinded in 1497, and the admiral was confirmed anew in all his privileges. He was even offered a tract of land of 26,000 square miles in Hispaniola, and the title of duke, by way of indemnifying him. But he refused this offer, in order not to add to the wrath of his enemies. According to his agreement, he had shared an eighth part of the expense of their discovery in all the countries where he was entitled to a corresponding part of landed property, and on the 25th April 1497 he was allowed to invest all his male heirs with the right of primogeniture to this property. This was provided for in the will which he drew up in 1498 shortly before

his fresh departure. Further, his youngest son, Fernando, was now made a page to the queen. But the six ships he demanded for his third voyage were long in making their appearance, although great dispatch seemed imperative; for on the 24th June 1497 John Cabot, a fellow-countryman of Columbus in the English service, had discovered up in the North the coast of a mainland, which he also took to be China, the Cathay of Marco Polo and the goal of the Spanish enterprises; and among the Portuguese, Vasco de Gama was on his voyage round the Cape of Good Hope and actually reached the long-sought India on the 20th May 1498. A competition had begun for new possessions overseas. Could Spain lie idle?

When at last in the autumn of 1497 six million maravedis (about £7500) were granted for the third expedition, Captain Niño unfortunately returned from Hispaniola and reported on his arrival at Huelva that he was bringing a large cargo of gold with him. No one was better pleased than Columbus. So the new mines of Hayna had not disappointed expectations, and the work was being carried on vigorously there! The six million maravedis were at once recalled and used for armaments. When Niño at length appeared in Burgos it turned out that his only freight was the notorious "ingots of gold"—captive aborigines! Thus it was the spring of 1498 before Columbus had his six ships collected. But their crews consisted for the most part of discharged prisoners, for only by accepting these could the necessary number of sailors, soldiers, artisans, field-workers be secured. With this company of five hundred and fifty men—this time there were also fifty women with them—Columbus set sail on the 30th May 1498.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### THE THIRD VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

ON the 30th May 1498 Columbus left the harbour of San Lucar north of Cadiz and arrived at Gomera on the 19th June. From there he sent three of his ships on a direct course to Hispaniola with provisions for the colony and news for his brother. He himself sailed further south to Cape Verde. But the islands of the "Green Promontory" were arid and bare and could not even supply him with the animals for slaughter he meant to take with him. On the 8th July he took a south-west course from there in the direction of the equator, for on this voyage he intended to leave out the islands formerly discovered in the north and to push on straight to the mainland which he believed extended in a south-easterly direction from the last point reached on his previous voyage. Natives of Hispaniola had told him of a negro-like tribe who hailed from a large continent far in the south. They made occasional raids on their coasts and carried weapons made of "guanin," a metal composed partly of gold and partly of silver and copper. Moreover, Spanish metallurgists had convinced him that, as had been learned from experience, the richest stores of gold, precious stones, pearls and spices were to be found near the equator, where the sun was hottest.

Immediately after leaving the Cape Verde islands he encountered such terrific heat along with calms that both ships and crews were in imminent peril of being consumed by the scorching sun. The tar in the planks began to melt, and had it not rained from the second day onwards, the ships would have certainly begun to leak. But the heat remained so stifling that scarcely anyone would venture to creep below deck to caulk the damaged parts in the hulls of the ships, and to look after food and drink. The hoops dropped off the casks and the victuals were spoiled. Columbus himself had to lie down with an attack of gout, although he could hardly leave his post at the wheel. He had not recovered yet from the exertions of his last voyage, and he had not been able to take any rest in Spain. Above all, he was tormented with an affliction

of his eyes. When at last after eight days a refreshing easterly breeze sprang up, he did not go any nearer to the equator but sailed straight west after the 13th July, still keeping to the torrid zone near the 8th degree of latitude. But on the 30th his store of drinking-water had run so low that he was compelled to turn to the north-west in order to reach as soon as possible the nearest of the Antilles, since he knew these islands. On the 31st a sailor suddenly sighted land in the west—three high peaks, which as the ships drew nearer united to form a massif—the south-west cape of an unknown island. In thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity Columbus named this island of the three peaks of salvation, Trinidad. It was not until the next day (1st August) that he found a good anchorage at its south-west corner, to which he gave the name of Point Arenal. In the west and south-west there could be seen a second, very long stretch of coast, which was mountainous in the north and seemed to be separated from Trinidad by an arm of the sea about two leagues in breadth. He thought at first that it consisted of two islands lying near to one another, and he called them Santa and Gracia. It was the mainland of South America, which on that day had been seen for the first time by Europeans.

The shore of the harbour at Point Arenal showed numberless trails of animals that recalled the tracks of goats. They were probably a herd of red deer. The island seemed well populated; but the natives as soon as they saw the ships had abandoned their canoes and fishing gear and fled to their villages. But on the 2nd August a large boat with twenty-four men approached the ship from the east. Its occupants, however, were by no means black or negro-like; on the contrary they were fairer than the Indians of the Antilles; they had long hair hanging down on their shoulders and wore coloured head-gear like turbans, many of them even had an apron like a skirt round their loins. No one understood what they were shouting; Columbus tried to entice them with glittering trinkets, and when that did not succeed he ordered the sailors to beat their drums and dance. But the natives took this for a declaration of war, and they began to shoot arrows from a distance, to which the admiral replied with some shots from the cross-bows. They now rowed up to one of the caravels; the pilot climbed down into their boat, and after distributing presents among them he was asked to go ashore with them. But when the Indians saw that he had first to go on board the admiral's ship to obtain per-

mission to accompany them, they went off and were not seen again.

The circumnavigation of the south-west corner of Trinidad proved to be more difficult than had been expected. For here the ships encountered an intricate maze of cross-currents that broke on them with tremendous force and with a crash like thunder. But the ships, fortunately, succeeded in getting into quieter sea through this "Serpent's Mouth," as Columbus named the channel. When some water happened to be drawn up, it was found to be fresh, and it remained like that in the whole gulf between Trinidad and Garcia. Many large rivers, Columbus concluded, must therefore empty themselves here. He now sailed northwards along the coast of the supposed island of Garcia (in reality the mainland promontory of Paria).

On the 5th August he sent some sailors on shore for the first time. He was so troubled himself with the malady in his eyes that he could not land on the coast, which, according to the statements of the natives, was said to be a mainland; but he drew a complete chart of the Gulf of Paria, which he sent to the Spanish monarchs along with the narrative of his voyage. The natives of this "Tierra firma" showed themselves friendly in every way, and they entertained their visitors hospitably with a liquor like wine produced from maize, a plant hitherto unknown, which Columbus brought to Europe for the first time. The Indians of Paria were more civilized than those of Hispaniola; they also wore ornaments of gold and even valuable pearls; according to their statements the region from which these came was quite near at hand. Otherwise none of the wonders of Marco Polo was to be found here either—but there were all the more of the wonders of nature, which surpassed in beauty and fertility all that had yet been seen.

But Columbus did not have the privilege of examining more closely the continent he had now found at last. His eyes were bleeding; constant over exertion had completely exhausted him; his powers were no longer equal to this excessive fatigue. The lack of an expert and reliable crew was especially felt when any step had to be taken on land. The three ships carried another large cargo of provisions for Hispaniola; these had already suffered on the voyage and were in danger of being ruined. Moreover, the thought of the colony and his brother's fate no longer left him any respite. After he had surveyed the Gulf of Paria, or the

Gulf of Pearls, and its shores, he resolved on the 13th August to set off at once for Hispaniola. The maze of currents made it impossible to return by sailing round Trinidad again. He therefore let his ships drift out into the Caribbean Sea, amidst dangers similar to those of the "Serpent's Mouth," through the north opening of the gulf, which he named the "Dragon's Mouth."

It never dawned on the discoverer that a completely new part of the earth lay before him in the coast of Paria. This fact did not become clear to anyone in the world until in the autumn of 1515 the Spaniard Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama and suddenly stood on the shore of a second world-sea. Columbus believed that he was on an unknown part of the coast of Asia or India, not far from the river Ganges. That was what he had expected, that was his goal, and his belief was only confirmed by the view he gained on his second voyage of the extent of the "Tierra firma" towards the south. The supreme experience of this third voyage was something very different: it was the conviction produced by the volume of water in the Gulf of Paria that he had discovered nothing less than the biblical Garden of Eden!

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### ON THE THRESHOLD OF PARADISE

A COMPARISON between the cosmic ideas of the ancients and those of the Middle Ages (in Chapter V) led to the conclusion that the progress in astronomical and geographical science from Aristotle to Copernicus, who was fifteen years old in 1492, is to be sought in the reverse direction. This defect stands in especially bold relief in the picture of the world which Columbus acquired from his own reflection and from his indiscriminate reading of medieval cosmographers, and he meant to prove the correctness of this world picture by his voyages of discovery. He was not a scholar, nor, above all, was he an investigator, recognizing as errors views hitherto accepted, seeking to find a fixed point by exact study and, by logical development of demonstrable facts and observations, building a system, the final consequences of which surprise, and perhaps frighten himself, as was the case with Copernicus the great revolutionary of cosmography. Columbus was wholly a man of purpose and action, and in that his greatness consisted. He was possessed by *one* scientific conviction alone—the sphericity of the earth was the presupposition of his work. But this did not lead him to despise the knowledge or the belief of contemporary cosmologists. On the contrary, he endeavoured to harmonize the chaotic errors and superstitions which passed for the science of his day with that conviction, the correctness of which he had shown in practice. He sought everywhere for new proofs of old errors. This endeavour, which was thoroughly in the spirit of the age, misled his glowing imagination into drawing deductions that even made him doubt his fundamental presupposition, without which he would never have become the discoverer of a new world; at the least they forced him to make serious modifications of that conviction. As a result of errors—his wrong idea about the small width of the ocean, about the large extent of the Asiatic continent and, especially, about the circumference of the earth—he had dis-

covered an epoch-making truth which completely blinded him by its light and left him floundering in a trackless labyrinth. The third voyage of discovery is the culminating point of this development.

In his account of this voyage—a confused jumble in striking contrast to the clearness and objectivity of his first diary 1492-93, the result no doubt of his physical disability and mental exhaustion—he gives a short review of the theological rather than the geographical conclusions to be drawn from his discoveries up till that time. “On the first voyage,” he writes, “I fulfilled all that had been predicted by the words of the prophet Isaiah and by other passages in Holy Writ concerning those lands in which the Name of the Most High should be spread by Spain (one of the ends of the earth). Scarce had I returned when your majesties sent me to the place where by divine inspiration I discovered 333 leagues of the mainland (Cuba) which forms the remotest end of the Orient.”

He then refers to the observation he had made even on his first voyage which had astonished both himself and his ship’s company: “Each time I sailed from Spain to the Indies I found as soon as I was 100 leagues west of the Azores an extraordinary change in the position of the constellations, in the temperature of the air and in the sea. I observed these alterations with special care and noticed that the compass, which until then was deflected to the north-east, now pointed a quarter of the card (11 degrees) to the north-west; the sea was so covered with weed that we were afraid we might ground on a shoal; before that line we had seen no trace of this herbage. Moreover, from that point onwards the sea was tranquil and was scarcely moved by any wind. When I sailed from the islands of the Green Promontory towards the equator the heat was so strong that the ships seemed to be red-hot. But as soon as we passed that line the climate altered, the air became mild and the coolness increased with every league we sailed. When I reached the island of Trinidad and the Tierra de Gracia, which lie almost on the same degree of latitude, the climate was the same as it is with us in Valencia in April. And yet the sun was in the sign of Virgo and cast its rays vertically down upon us. This milder temperature is only due to the greater height of this part of the earth’s surface.”

Columbus now entered the Gulf of Paria, where the sea,

traversed by the immense floods of the Orinoco delta and covered with a layer of fresh water, sweeps in with a rapid current and pours out again through the Dragon's Mouth. These enormous masses of fresh water, which practically form a sea themselves, he argues, can only come from rivers flowing through a territory of vast extent. It seems as if a vision of the South American continent rose up before him! But this is not a satisfying explanation of the rapid descent of these waters; they must dash down from a tremendous height, the first outlying salient of which the ships had got over on the westward voyage. From this point onwards the earth must mount higher and higher toward the stars; hence the change in the constellations; the earth, therefore, must lose here its otherwise circular shape. And with this idea gained from wrong astronomical observations he now linked the popular notion regarding the site of Paradise. This had not vanished from the earth, but still existed in some inaccessible region. His election to be the discoverer of this terrestrial paradise was not merely a picturesque expression for the beauty and grandeur of the lands he had opened up; even in his diary of the first voyage, on the 21st February 1493, he says quite plainly that the earthly paradise must be situated here in this glorious clime at the "extreme boundaries of the Orient, as sacred theologians and the philosophers had maintained from time immemorial." On the third voyage these thoughts are knit together into a complete cosmological system, and raking together all the desultory knowledge he had acquired from his reading he gives expression to this system in the following words:

"I have always read that everything, land as well as water, has a spherical shape; Ptolemy and other authors prove this by eclipses of the moon and similar phenomena. But the completely altered position of the pole star which I observed here in the West compelled me to form another conception of the form of the earth. It is not circular, as has hitherto been assumed, but shaped like a pear, *i.e.* round, no doubt, but elongated and higher at the place where the stalk begins. This elevation must, therefore, be nearer the sky; it lies under the equator, in the middle of the ocean, at the extreme boundaries of the Orient. Ptolemy and other scholars consider the earth to be spherical, and hold that it must be everywhere the same as it is where they live. That may hold good for their hemisphere, but the hemi-

sphere over which I have sailed has a swelling like a pear at its base.

"Holy Writ establishes the truth that the Lord created Paradise and planted therein the tree of life, from which the four great rivers of the world rise, the Ganges, the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Nile. Nothing was found, or is to be found in the writings of the Greeks and Romans that has any resemblance to well-founded evidence regarding the site of this earthly paradise, and the maps of the world tell just as little that is certain about this. Some of them place it at the source of the Nile. But hitherto no traveller who has visited these countries has found such a mild climate or the sun so near.

"The holy Isidore, Bede, Ambrose and Duns Scotus and all unbiased theologians are at one in asserting that Paradise is to be sought in the Orient. I believe that this land which I have discovered is of enormous extent, and that farther south there lie still more lands, about which no one yet has had any knowledge. I am not of the opinion that Paradise has the form of a mountain precipitous on every side, such as people are fond of representing it. Rather does it lie on the summit of a pear-shaped height. From there those great volumes of water must flow down that make such a wild sea as the one here where I am at present. Moreover, I have never heard nor read that such an immeasurable quantity of fresh water can exist in the midst and in the immediate vicinity of salt water. If this water did not come from Paradise then the wonder would be still greater, for nowhere in the world is a stream of such immense extent and of similar depth to be found.

"If I succeeded in crossing the equator and pressing on to the highest point of this height, I should certainly perceive a still greater mildness in the air and still more marked changes in the constellations and in the seas. But that does not mean that I believe that one can sail or climb up to the highest point, for no one can succeed in reaching Paradise without the special favour of the Most High."

These fantasies to which the discoverer of a new world devoutly surrendered himself have no concern with science. They are dreams under the incubus of a century that had nothing but scorn and mockery for the belief that the earth turned on its axis—the belief that "the earth was turned as though it were on a roasting-jack, to be grilled by the sun on every side"—



a witticism made not by a layman or a theologian, but by a famous mathematician of the sixteenth century named Schoner! But there can certainly be no question that these cosmic dreams of a Paradise on earth had a kind of grandeur. Columbus was great even in his errors.

## CHAPTER XL

### THE HELL ON HISPANIOLA

FROM the gates of Eden to the hell of Hispaniola! When Columbus landed on the 30th August 1498 at the south coast near the gold mines of Hayna, the whole island was seething with rebellion.

Bartolomeo had governed Hispaniola for two years; if he was not in Isabella himself, his younger brother Diego took his place. After the departure of the viceroy in the spring of 1498 Bartolomeo's activity had been vigorous and purposeful. He had a town founded near the new gold mines, which was afterwards known as San Domingo, and a line of forts erected right across the island between the two main settlements. He roused the colonists into action and even had two caravels built. This raised the spirits of the people; they were no longer entirely dependent on ships coming from Spain, which were not at their immediate disposal. The Adelantado at once gained a notable success in his dealings with the natives. The large and wealthy province of Xaragua on the west coast had hitherto been altogether spared by the Spaniards. He paid a sudden visit to its powerful chief, a brother-in-law of Caonabo, and succeeded in inducing him to make voluntary payment of the tribute imposed on all the aborigines. The intermediary in this friendly agreement was the chieftain's sister, Anacaona, the widow of Caonabo. This shrewd and forgiving woman wished to save her brother from the melancholy fate of her husband. She was venerated by all the natives for her composition of the songs they sung at their dances, and the romantic wonders of a new world so immensely superior in every way to all that she knew, allured her vivacious spirit. She openly showed a preference for the foreigners, especially for the Adelantado. Her example was of more value than a new gold mine.

So things looked very promising—had it not been for the unbridled licence of the Spanish soldiery. One of these scoundrels violated the wife of the most peaceable of all the caciques,

Guarionex, of the King's Plain. In that district the missionaries, who had soon learned the language of the country, had been successful in their work; Guarionex was on the eve of being baptized. But now he resolutely rejected a religion which did not restrain its adherents from the most despicable crimes, and some of his people destroyed the church that had already been erected in his residence. They were arrested and burned in accordance with Spanish penal law. Now even his long-suffering patience was exhausted—Guarionex formed an alliance with all the neighbouring caciques for the overthrow of this foreign reign of terror. The Adelantado learned in good time of this fresh conspiracy: a sudden attack at night brought into his hands all the caciques who were implicated in the affair. Two had to pay the death penalty, but the guilty Spaniard was sent to the gallows. This act of justice won the heart of the unfortunate cacique; in him, too, the Adelantado had gained a new friend.

In Isabella the malcontents, the idlers and the adventurers still had the upper hand. On their being engaged they had bound themselves by oath to stay some years; they received a wage which was irregularly paid owing to the lack of supplies from Spain, and they had to undertake heavy work. The gold that was found did not go into their pockets, it belonged to the government, and part of it found its way to that damned Italian clan, whose orders they had to obey foaming with rage. What use to them was land which they had to cultivate themselves, instead of harnessing the Indians to the plough and driving them before them with the whip? And if at any time they had a little fun with the handsome wives of the natives, they were threatened with the prison or the gallows. What sort of a life was that? Far better to go back to Spain again—like the admiral, who would certainly never return. They had railed at him while he stayed on among them; now they cursed him for abandoning the colony. He had no doubt got enough gold by his bartering—meanwhile they were perishing here in misery and filling his brothers' pockets. What in the world did the Adelantado think he was? Where was his commission with the king's signature? Wasn't Roldan, the senior judge, asking the same question too? He was bound to know—he had some feeling for common folk, for he was one of themselves.

Columbus in the past had always urged that a magistrate of higher standing should be sent to Hispaniola to take over this office. But the higher officials in Spain were reluctant to do this;

besides, what need was there of formal jurisprudence over there, where for the present only martial law held sway, and where the viceroy had all the necessary powers? So Columbus had appointed as senior judge this Roldan, a man who, like himself, was of humble origin—sailor, soldier, but clever and reliable, with a healthy ambition to succeed, and, in addition, popular with his former comrades. There was no more suitable person available.

The brilliant career that Roldan suddenly achieved turned his head. His pride was hurt by his having to obey the Adelantado any longer; he resolved to bring about his fall. He made common cause with the malcontents; the rule of these foreign upstarts had to be ended once and for all. The Adelantado was to be stabbed at the impending execution of the condemned Spaniard, who was a friend of Roldan's. But he reckoned without his host; the execution did not take place; Bartolomeo had pardoned the offender.

But there was no going back now. Roldan gathered a gang round him, plundered the storehouse in Isabella, began a regular campaign against the Adelantado and laid siege to him in one of the forts. With his band of brigands which increased daily he then invaded the province of Xaragua, where he lived at the expense of the natives and roused all the Indians to rebellion. He found it easy to win over the despairing natives by deluding them with false statements—the admiral was deposed; he was their governor now and he would give them a better time. Even Guarionex had to join him lest his own subjects should seek to overthrow him. War began in all quarters, war with the natives and with the mutineers, whose numbers constantly increased. Diego had to entrench himself in the fort of the colony of Isabella. The Adelantado was besieged in his fort La Concepción, and the company on which he could rely dwindled every day. He could not hold out there for any length of time.

Then on the 3rd February 1498 two ships from Spain unexpectedly arrived at San Domingo with provisions and troops. That gave him a breathing space. He also received now the royal confirmation of his office as representative of the viceroy. An arduous incursion into the mountains brought the insurgent caciques into his power. He liberated Guarionex, for he understood his desperate situation. With this velvet glove on the mailed fist he pacified the Indians. He had less success with the mutineers. He built a bridge of gold for them, but Roldan

persisted in his defiance, and when the three caravels which Columbus had sent on in front of him from the Canary Islands appeared off the coast of Xaragua, where they had come by mistake, he was the first on board. He took supplies of victuals and weapons, and when the captains after three days began to suspect that there was something wrong, the most of their company of quondam convicts deserted to the mutineers.

This was the state in which the admiral found Hispaniola when he returned on the 30th August 1498. It was evident at once that the rebels could not be quelled by force of arms. They were far superior in numbers and were in dangerous proximity to San Domingo. When Columbus shortly after his arrival ordered his company to form up in ranks, only seventy men put in appearance, the rest simply stayed away, because they suspected they were to march against Roldan; and among these seventy there were scarcely forty on whom any reliance could be placed. The only resort, therefore, was an amicable arrangement, however much the admiral in his pride might resent this. But Roldan laughed at the man who was sent as mediator, and laid down unacceptable conditions. Columbus had to make a proclamation on the 12th September announcing that every one who was unwilling to remain would be allowed to return to Spain. But while the ships that set sail on the 18th October carried many of the malcontents with them, the mutineers stayed behind. Columbus sent with these ships the account of his last voyage and the chart of the Gulf of Paria. He also gave a description of the melancholy state of affairs on Hispaniola and of his own great distress. He requested that Roldan should at once be sent back to Spain for trial. But in the same ships letters went from Roldan and his numerous adherents, laying all the blame for the condition of the island on the tyranny of the Adelantado, and of the viceroy.

A month later a compromise was made with Roldan on conditions that meant a triumph for the insurgents. These included an amnesty, drafts for the pay still due to them, even testimonials to their good conduct. In return they pledged themselves to leave the island within fifty days. For this purpose Columbus had to hand over the two caravels with which he had come from Paria, and he had now to abandon his intention of sending Bartolomeo there with the important mission of making a further investigation of the pearl-coast.

But while Columbus was occupied with restoring order in the Indian districts, the mutineers had changed their minds. A Spanish court of justice was no joking matter, and the captains of the three ships which returned home in October were unbiased witnesses whose testimony would scarcely tell in their favour. Besides the case for the viceroy would no doubt also be heard. As a matter of fact Columbus had given a trustworthy man a letter to take with him to the administration. In that letter he described the real nature of the compromise of November 1498—it was due to extortion and it could have no binding force. The ships therefore remained for the present in San Domingo. If the position became untenable, they would offer the last means of salvation for the viceroy and his brother.

Fresh negotiations were now set afoot. Day after day Columbus hoped that new supplies of provisions and troops from Spain would deliver him from his desperate situation. One ship did come at last—but it only brought the reply to his report of October 1498, in which he had demanded the recall of Roldan: the colonial Minister Fonseca explained that there had not been time yet to take this matter in hand! The intention apparently was to deprive the admiral of his prestige and honour and thus have no difficulty in dealing with him. This was Fonseca's revenge for the kick Columbus, during his last sojourn in Spain, had given to an insolent domestic of the colonial Minister.

Roldan also learned of the arrival of the ship. But everything remained peaceful in San Domingo. There was no sign of the movement of troops or of examining magistrates. The cause of the rebels, then, could not be in such bad odour! All the worse for the viceroy! They became more arrogant and made more and more shameless demands, until at last the hopelessness of his position forced Columbus to submit to them completely. The rebels extorted from him large landed estates, in addition to an almost unlimited right to dispose of Indian labour; and their great triumph was the reinstatement of Roldan as magistrate. Abandoned by his government, Columbus was utterly at the mercy of the caprice and jeering insolence of Roldan and his accomplices.

Thus the summer of 1499 passed. Then a section of the rebels determined to return to Spain, in the autumn, although Columbus had only signed the complete amnesty with the proviso that it should receive the royal approval. At last he also

resolved to go to Spain with these ships to plead in person his cause that had been so culpably neglected by the government.

He was prevented from carrying out this intention by a fresh rising among the natives and by the surprising news that four ships had been sighted on the west coast of Hispaniola. What could that mean? Columbus soon learned: the commander of the flotilla was the cavalier Hojeda who had been his most capable officer in the war with Caonabo. The ships had returned—from a successful voyage of discovery to the Gulf of Paria and its surrounding territory! The voyage was a private venture on the part of Hojeda and some shipowners, one of whom was a Florentine merchant, Amerigo Vespucci, who was afterwards to be honoured by having the part of the world discovered by Columbus called America after him. Hojeda showed a commission from the colonial minister Fonseca, with whom he was a special favourite. He had undertaken the voyage on the basis of the chart which Columbus had drawn and had forwarded in October of the previous year (cf. page 262). Fonseca had secretly given a copy of it to his friend Hojeda, and with the aid of this chart the expedition had succeeded in exploring a large stretch of the South American continent! Hojeda had attacked Columbus, his companion-in-arms, in the back and had struck from his hands the trump card he was certain of holding after his last voyage. Hojeda did not even consider it necessary to pay the admiral a visit; on the contrary the colonists and the natives were the first to hear from him that Columbus had fallen into disgrace, that his protectress, Queen Isabella, was ill, that a new arrangement of the government was in prospect and so forth, news which left Columbus no longer in any doubt as to the royal displeasure. He had been abandoned, the agreements had been annulled, his work destroyed and its gains smuggled into the hands of others, he was pushed aside. What would become now of the sacred obligation he had undertaken, and for the sake of which he had hunted like a sleuth-hound after all the golden treasures of these new lands—the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the infidels? Unless help now came to him from above he would become what he had been before, a voice in the wilderness, a troublesome beggar at the gates of the mighty, who neglected the one thing needful, had no intention of hazarding their worldly wealth for the sake of that lofty enterprise and thrust his vow aside with a contemptuous wave of the hand.

Would God permit that? If only someone would give him an answer to this torturing question!

It did not remain unanswered! Once more one of those chance happenings occurred that convinced him afresh of his higher mission. He gives an account of it himself in the letter of accusation he sent to the queen in November 1500: "On Christmas day 1499, which found me worn out and assailed both by the Indians and by evil-disposed Christians, when I knew not how my life was to be saved, I went into a small caravel and sailed out to sea. Then the voice of the Lord gave me wonderful comfort. This voice said to me: 'Be of good courage, do not give way to grief; trust in My help; the seven years—the time appointed for the finding of gold sufficient for the fulfilment of the vow—have not yet passed.' On that same day I learned that twenty-four leagues away numerous gold mines, which seem to form a single large one, had been found. Some of my men collected in a single day gold worth from 120 to 150 castellanos. . . ."

While he was thus intent only on opening new sources of gold for the state treasury, he and the colony seemed to have been completely forgotten in Spain. He sat like a prisoner among a rabble of criminals, whom he did not dare to provoke, and with whom he had to live and come to terms, so that something like order might slowly mature.

It was the chief magistrate Roldan who conducted the parley with cavalier Hojeda! This led to pitched battles, for he required victuals and his men simply pillaged the natives. Meantime Roldan had undergone a change; he no longer felt quite at ease, and the long silence of the government made him think seriously. After all he was not to get out of the affair quite scatheless, he had far too long a score against him for that. Accordingly he began to ingratiate himself again with the admiral, and Columbus had to submit patiently to this also, for after the unbridled greed of the rabble under Roldan's leadership had been once roused and brute force had crushed out every right, this seed shot up into the blade. The conspirators fell foul of one another, Roldan himself saw his powerful position in the band imperilled. This gave him a welcome opportunity; by exercising a ruthless severity he hoped either to obtain oblivion for his past misdeeds or to provide himself with extenuating circumstances, in the event of his having after all to settle a painful reckoning in the end. The audacity and craftiness of the man stiffened even the admiral's



back, and when in the spring of 1500 fresh insurrections broke out, the object of which was to murder both the admiral and Roldan, Columbus ventured at last to take a firm grip once more. With ten determined men he made a surprise attack on the ringleaders. Most of them were taken prisoner, the fugitives being pursued and brought in by Bartolomeo, and seven of them were hanged. At the end of August the rebellion was crushed. Some corpses were still hanging on the gallows when two Spanish ships suddenly arrived in San Domingo on the 23rd August with an official on board of one, whom Columbus had asked to be sent two years before.

## CHAPTER XLI

### THE ADMIRAL IN CHAINS

AT the admiral's suggestion made in October 1498 the Spanish government had drawn up in March 1499 the commission for an examining magistrate who was to interrogate the rebels in Hispaniola, and punish all the guilty or bring them to Spain for trial. The man entrusted with this task was a poor cavalier of the Calatrava Order, Don Francisco de Bobadilla. But his departure was constantly postponed; the Colonial Minister evidently wanted to leave the admiral, whom he hated, to deal with his own difficulties. Let him find his way out himself with his conceit and his marvellous energy! Perhaps too the political situation and the dispute with France that still went on kept the Court from taking the necessary time to deal with the confused affairs of the colony, and, further, Queen Isabella's energy was crippled by illness and by the painful experiences she had undergone; for the death of the Crown Prince Juan had been followed by the death of his sister the queen of Portugal in 1498.

It was not until the close of 1499, when the ship arrived bringing back to Spain a dozen of the rebels with their kept women and their train of slaves, and the queen heard of this scandalous transaction, that her wrath flared up and her pity was roused for the enslaved Indians, whom the viceroy must have handed over to the arbitrary power of this gang. Now when it was far too late the government resolved to take action, and the consciousness of having neglected a pressing duty and thereby caused irreparable damage stole timidly in amidst the wrath at the loose dealings which the admiral had evidently allowed to gain ground! Even so another six months passed before Bobadilla, invested with full powers, set off for Hispaniola in the middle of July. He arrived in San Domingo on the 23rd August.

His commission of the 11th March 1499 was to the effect that he should cross-examine the rebels and plunderers, "take civil and criminal proceedings against them and against those who were absent," impose penalties according to his discretion, and if

necessary call in the assistance of the admiral. A second commission dated 21st May 1499 made known to all the inhabitants of the colony that Bobadilla was entrusted with the government of the island; all whom he considered ineligible to remain in the colony any longer should present themselves in Spain without delay. A third document ordered the admiral—no longer the viceroy—to hand over the entire administration to the new governor, and a fourth contained nothing more than a command of four lines to the admiral to obey Bobadilla, “who would make a statement to him on the part of the sovereigns!”

Bobadilla did not consider it necessary to present himself in his new official dignity to the deposed admiral, who was in the fort of La Concepción. On the first morning he had his commission of the 21st March read at the church door after divine service and then he ordered Diego Colon to hand over the prisoners who had lain in gaol since the last insurrections. Diego answered that he had no power to do this and asked for the cavalier's written credentials in order to send them to his brother. The answer was: Since he had no powers he did not require to see the document. This quite correct procedure on the part of Diego seemed already to smack of insubordination to Bobadilla. Next morning he ordered the second commission, of the 21st May, which confirmed his appointment as governor, to be publicly proclaimed. As Diego still continued to appeal to the higher authority of his brother, Bobadilla produced the third document, which ordered the government to be handed over to him without reserve, and in addition announced that all outstanding salaries and wages were to be paid. This was received with loud cheers by the assembled colonists. Bobadilla then took up his quarters in the house of the absent viceroy, confiscated his whole property, even his papers, proclaimed to all a licence to seek gold valid for twenty years, reduced the government's share in it to an eleventh part, while the collectors had hitherto had to deliver a third of it, treated Roldan and some of his confederates with marked respect and left no doubt that he would have the admiral removed to Spain at the first possible moment.

Columbus thought at first that he had to deal with a foolhardy adventurer, like Hojeda or Vicente Pinzon, who had also been recently seen with several vessels in the vicinity of Hispaniola. But when he received fresh reports every day of Bobadilla's high-handed conduct, he betook himself to a small settlement near

San Domingo called Bonao, where he arrived just in time to hear the public announcement of Bobadilla's powers. There could no longer be any doubt as to the fact of his deposition. He had sufficient self-control to let his successor know by letter that he was on the eve of returning to Spain and that he was ready to give him all the information he desired regarding the discharge of his official duties. When no answer came he now made him aware by his own statement that by his agreement with the crown he had been invested for all time coming with higher powers than his, and that therefore the orders of an envoy could not be binding upon him. Thereupon two officers of Bobadilla appeared at his house and handed to him the document which in four lines commanded the admiral to render unconditional obedience to the person authorized. This gave Columbus his death-blow.

The enquiry which Bobadilla conducted was directed, not against the mutineers and their misdeeds, but against the deposed viceroy and his brothers, and since there was enough people who besieged the new governor with accusations against one or other of them, and who were ready to tell him what he wanted to hear, because they had some motive for gaining his clemency or his favour, he was soon supplied with sufficient pretexts to put the finishing touch on his shameless conduct. He first ordered Diego to be arrested without giving any reason, and to be put into irons on board one of the caravels. And when Columbus, with no one accompanying him, came straight to San Domingo on the 23rd August, Bobadilla's constables were awaiting him there. He was taken to the fort and put into chains.

Columbus submitted to this immeasurable humiliation without resistance. If the king had ordered that, it was meet that he should submit. He even wrote to his brother Bartolomeo, who was still in Xaragua with his company and whom Bobadilla had not ventured to approach, advising him to submit to the royal will without resistance. Bartolomeo came at once to San Domingo; he was also arrested and taken in fetters on board the second caravel. All intercourse between the brothers was strictly forbidden. They remained in solitary confinement, no one was allowed to speak to them. They were not examined, they had not to answer for anything, they simply lay in chains like dangerous criminals, for what reason they knew not. The extremely high-handed way in which the royal official had interpreted his mandate led them to fear that he might consider

himself justified in hanging the three brothers on the nearest gallows.

The mutineers, for whose punishment Columbus had asked a magistrate, were pardoned. Roldan became the new governor's right-hand man, and after Bobadilla had industriously gathered the testimonies of those who ought to have appeared before him as delinquents, he ordered the three State prisoners to be conveyed to Spain and handed over to the Colonial Minister Fonseca.

One of bishop Fonseca's officers, Alonzo de Villejo, a cavalier, was charged with the transporting of the prisoners. But Bobadilla was mistaken in his idea of his character. When Columbus saw the cavalier enter his cell with some armed men, he prepared himself for swift death on the gallows.

"Whither are you taking me, Villejo?" he asked quietly.

"To the ship, your Excellency, to embark," was the answer.

"To embark?" Columbus asked incredulously; "Villejo, are you speaking the truth?"

"By your Excellency's life," Villejo assured him, "it is true!"

Columbus followed him down the stairs of the fort to the street, where a crowd of sight-seers had collected to gloat over his misfortunes, and, convoyed by this mob who never wearied of hurling insults at the prisoner in chains and giving vent to their rejoicing, he walked to the harbour and went on board the ship which set sail at once. The second caravel with his brothers followed. The air in Hispaniola was now pure—Bobadilla had swept the island clean with an iron broom.

As soon as the ships were out of sight of the island Villejo wished to take off the prisoner's chains. Both he and the captain felt the same silent indignation at this scandalous action, which was bound to damage the reputation of Spain throughout the whole world. Even though the arrested men were guilty, it could only mean the depraved satisfaction of the meanest thirst for revenge. But Columbus refused. "No!" he replied, "the king and the queen commanded me to submit to any penalty that Bobadilla in their name might inflict upon me; in their name he has put me in chains; I shall wear them until they themselves order me to take them off, and I shall treasure them as relics, memorials of the recompense I have received for my services."

Favourable winds cut the torture short. As early as the 25th November 1500 both ships landed in Cadiz.

## CHAPTER XLII

### COLUMBUS MAKES AN INDICTMENT

THE first thing that Columbus did after his arrival in Cadiz was to despatch a letter to a lady Donna Juana de la Torre, the sister of Antonio de Torres. She had formerly been a nurse to the Infanta Juan and she was a great favourite with Queen Isabella. The letter was intended for the queen; it contained a description of the occurrences in Hispaniola and the following indictment against Bobadilla:

"Honoured lady! It is certainly something new for me to complain about the world, but it is an old experience that the world delights in acting wrongly. It has attacked me times without number, but I have been able to defend myself against every assault. Now, however, it has so trampled me to the ground that I am defenceless and bewildered. It is only trust in the help of God that still sustains me.

"I came to Spain with the intention of serving your princes with all my love and devotion, and no one has ever yet given such service as mine has been. God made me the ambassador of a new heaven and a new earth, which the prophet Isaiah and the Revelation of John had already promised; He showed me where they were to be found. The world was unbelieving, but the Lord gave the queen discernment and understanding of these things, He made her as His beloved daughter the heiress of this new world. And now there is no creature so low as not to have the right to cover me with shame. Spain, a country in which so much magnanimity has always prevailed, shows itself more hostile to me than if I had made a present of the Indies to the Moors.

"In order to give the queen some consolation after the death of the Infanta, I undertook another voyage to that new heaven and that new earth, which had hitherto been hidden. The pearls from Paria and the gold from Hispaniola, I imagined, ought at last to appease the hate against me. When I went back to Hispaniola I found half of the colonists there in insurrection, and till the last they waged war against me as against a Moor. The arrival of

cavalier Hojeda set the seal on all this disorderly conduct. He made a great show with gifts, letters-patent and rewards and gathered a numerous gang round him, for in Hispaniola most of the men are vagabonds, they have neither wife nor child. Hojeda threatened that he would return with more ships and men; the queen lay at death's door. Then Vicente Pinzon came with four caravels; there was fresh disturbance, but it soon died down. The Indians let the cannibals know that a large fleet was coming under the command of the brother of the alcalde Roldan. Rebellion after rebellion broke out. I was determined not to punish anyone, but in the end the debauchery and ingratitude compelled me to act otherwise. I would have dealt in the same manner with my own brother, had it become manifest that he intended to murder me and seize for himself the rule I held in the name of their majesties. I had long been prepared to issue a decree condemning this rabble who feared neither God nor man, for I was brought into such disrepute that had I built hospitals or churches they would have been declared to be dens of thieves. I asked again and again that a person learned in the law should be sent. At length it was decided to do this, but the action taken was entirely opposed to what the situation in Hispaniola demanded.

"When Bobadilla arrived I was in the King's Plain, the Adelantado in Xaragua. Peace had been restored again. On the day after his arrival Bobadilla proclaimed himself governor, appointed a magistrate, ordered executions to be taken in hand, distributed free licences for the collection of gold valid for twenty years, remitted the taxes and paid wages to people who had failed to keep their obligations. He threatened to send me and my brothers to Spain in chains, and this indeed he did in the end. Was it possible that I was degraded in this way by the order of their majesties?

"At first I thought that Bobadilla was a rebel like the rest. When I was convinced afterwards that he acted by royal authority I did not lose my peace. I greeted him on his arrival, informed him that I was on the point of leaving and of selling my goods and chattels, and that I wished to hand over the government to him at once. I requested him not to be in too great a hurry to distribute privileges. No answer! Since Bobadilla bestowed privileges on vagabonds for no reason or merit, in order to gain time I had an enquiry made into the nature of these privileges. All these indulgences are entirely superfluous; people receive landed

estates at a ridiculously low price; in four years—the period they are to remain—every bit of ground will be worth thousands. But most of them want to amass wealth as quickly as possible by working in the gold mines or by robbery, and then to scamper off.

“Bobadilla egged on all the settlers against me, alleging that I meant to encroach on their special rights and appropriate what belongs to the sovereigns. He induced them to bring actions against me, and along with them drew up a bill of indictment more malicious than Hell could have invented. I am told that he has had to spend a great deal of money to keep this position of his. Even before he came he was my enemy. Where has anyone heard of an examining magistrate who gathered rebels round him and had them bear witness against their governor?

“Bobadilla ordered Diego to be put into chains and thrown into one of the caravels. When I came to him altogether defenceless the same thing happened to me, and also to the Adelantado when he returned from Xaragua. Bobadilla’s first care was to appropriate for himself the gold I had gathered and melt it down without measuring it or weighing it, ostensibly for the purpose of delivering it up to those to whom it belongs. He is said to have kept the most of it for himself. I had laid aside for their majesties lumps of gold as large as hens’ eggs. The scoundrel made off with these first, so that the value of the gold mines should not be publicly known until he had lined his own nest. I had besides four million maravedis from imposts and tithes lying there; he took the most of that for himself and scattered the rest of it in a ridiculous fashion. If their majesties order an exact account to be rendered in my presence, they will learn the truth about this matter. I am very greatly hurt by having an examining magistrate sent out to me, who knew that an unfavourable report would be sufficient to have me thrust aside and enable him to step into my place. Had their majesties sent me a magistrate two years before that—all this shame and scandal would have been avoided and my honour would have remained untarnished!

“I was treated like a governor who had been sent to a well-ordered province, where the laws were obeyed, and I was blamed because I had to reckon with the altogether different state of things that existed in Hispaniola. I ought rather to have been judged as a captain who went from Spain to conquer countries and to subdue wild, warlike tribes inhabiting mountains and forests, and who from the beginning has never been able to lay down



his weapons, but has striven to win respect for law in a country where laws and treaties were of no account.

“Bobadilla appropriated everything that was in my house. He may have needed to do this, but no buccaneer would have acted in this manner with merchants whom he had plundered! The worst of all is that he has even seized my papers, which give the clearest proof of my innocence—but that is the very reason why he did not give them up. What an honourable, upright man!”

## CHAPTER XLIII

### THE TRIBUNAL

THE news of the arrival of the admiral and his brothers as prisoners in chains, like the first tidings of his discovery of unknown lands on the other side of the ocean nine years before, ran like wildfire through the whole of Spain. But on this occasion it was a wave of shame and indignation that flooded the land and soon reached the royal Court in Granada. Juana de la Torre could therefore venture to lay before the queen Columbus' letter of accusation. It produced a very painful impression. This, of course, had never been intended when that ass Bobadilla had been given such an ambiguous mandate! This disgraceful scandal, which made the Spanish government the laughing-stock of the whole of Europe, and, what was worst of all, also crowned the admiral now with the halo of martyrdom, must be got rid of immediately. A courier set off for Cadiz, where the prisoners meantime lay in the court-house. They were set at liberty forthwith. Columbus received a gracious letter from the queen, signed with her own hand, inviting him to come to Granada. She also sent him 2000 ducats in gold for an outfit in keeping with his rank. He obeyed the summons, and on the 17th December he stood again as he had done in former days before Ferdinand and Isabella. But his eyesight was bad, and when he made the required obeisance before their majesties he collapsed on the steps of the throne sobbing convulsively. He had borne with pride and disdain the violation of his rights, the insolence and brutality of the royal understrapper—but here at the hidden source of all his humiliations his unflinching self-control gave way. The Court ladies shook their scent-bottles; their majesties took three steps forward and led him to a chair, as they had done before. The queen's eyes filled with tears—this wretch Bobadilla would receive due payment for that painful scene!

The admiral calmed down and found his voice again. His letter contained all he had to say, and no time was lost in answering it: Bobadilla was to be superseded at once, a new commissioner

was to be despatched to Hispaniola, all the blockhead's enactments were to be cancelled, the admiral, as a matter of course, reinstated in all his rights and so forth. The impression at the moment was so overwhelming that no adequate words could be found to soothe and comfort Columbus, and, certainly, in the zeal created by pity and the sense of shame far more promises were made than were privately meant to be kept.

For nine months Columbus remained in Granada and in the vicinity of the Court "without money or credit," as a friend of his wrote to another; he urged his claims and he waited. But nothing happened, although all were of one mind that something had to be done if the colony was not to go to wrack and ruin. The admiral was treated by the king and queen with a marked distinction he had never experienced before. The new commissioner, Don Nicholas de Ovanda, was appointed, but the preparations for his voyage were made on an astonishingly large scale: no less than thirty vessels were destined for Hispaniola, and it took considerable time and an immense amount of money to load them and furnish them with crews. Meanwhile one Job's comforter after another came from Hispaniola: Bobadilla had had to put himself entirely in the hands of the rebels; the few honest people, those who were of any account as industrious and permanent settlers, gave notice of terminating their agreements—they could not stand this hell any longer; without a firm hand like that of the Adelantado the colony would go to ruin. But the Colonial Minister Fonseca was not so hard pressed as to let the damage his tools overseas had done come to light. All these things had happened and there was no altering them, and this raking them up again was a vexatious affair that had best lie buried in official documents. Certainly the deposed viceroy was to be reinstated, but this need not be done in such a headlong hurry—he would be pleased himself before he went back to know that order had been restored, the island purged of his enemies, an adequate indemnification exacted and then a new chapter in the history of Hispaniola begun.

If Queen Isabella had the honourable intention of reinstating Columbus in his rights, King Ferdinand had other plans. He had luckily got rid of the viceroy, that troublesome manager, who by his agreement claimed an eighth part of all the revenue from the new colonies, and he was determined to let things stand as they were. Ten years ago—it was different, little or nothing

was known about these matters. But now Columbus was no longer needed; the Colonial Office was besieged with ship-owners and merchants who asked for permission to undertake voyages of discovery at their own expense. Many of them had sailed with Columbus, had had his charts in their hands and made copies of them. The way was open. The agreement with Columbus had long since been disregarded; the voyages of Hojeda, Pinzon and Vespucci had enlarged his discoveries in a way that had never been anticipated—coasts in the ocean had come into sight of such extent as to argue the existence of immense stretches of land. Although, certainly, all these possessions would never have fallen into the lap of Spain without his help, it was quite out of the question to think of making him a joint partner. No doubt there was the agreement—the admiral, injured in his honour, embittered and more sensitive than ever, would hold to that with his well-known obstinacy. Meantime, therefore, there was only one expedient—to postpone as long as possible the critical moment. The admiral's health was shattered; the queen, too, who usually set store on serving the political soup with a pinch of honour, was sickly. All would come right in good time.

Meanwhile attempts were made to divert the admiral and to keep him employed. His plans for a new voyage, at which he wrought incessantly, were discussed with the greatest eagerness, and he was listened to gravely and patiently when he preached the crusade to Jerusalem, which now obsessed his whole imagination. The seven years of preparation had expired, the gold had melted away through his fingers, and nothing had been done for the fulfilment of his vow. Satan had hitherto prevented this fulfilment, he wrote to Pope Alexander in February 1502. And the time was so very short! For he had come to the firm belief from his study of the writings of Cardinal d'Ailly, whose mystical incense had more and more befogged him, that the world was to come to an end in a hundred and fifty-five years—a short space of time in which to convert all the nations of the world to the one true faith. This belief was intimately connected with his work of discovery and with the task that inevitably followed from it—the union of the ends of the earth under the sign of the Cross. He founded it on quotations from Holy Writ and from numerous theological books which he cited in an unfinished "Book of Prophecies" he was writing at that time. In his will

of 1498, drawn up before setting out on his third voyage, he had already enjoined his heirs to deposit money in the Bank of San Giorgio in Genoa. This money was intended either to release them from the duty of undertaking such a crusade at their own expense, if Spain were to abandon the idea, or to aid the Pope, if a schism in the Church were to threaten him with the loss of his rank or of his temporal possessions—a prophetic declaration of war, therefore, against the Reformation, which twenty years later divided the world into two religious parties, instead of uniting the ends of the earth under one faith. This “Book of Prophesyings” was meant to be his politico-religious testament, a permanent warning written in letters of fire on the walls of the Spanish royal palace.

The ends of the earth, however, were by no means all found yet, new ones were emerging everywhere. The Portuguese, not content with their half of the world on this side of the Indies, now established themselves firmly in South America, whither a storm had driven some of their vessels bound for Calcutta. If Spain wished to keep the West in its possession, it had to throw in that direction all the militant forces it employed in discovery. The thirty vessels of Ovando set sail for Hispaniola on the 13th February 1502. So there remained for Columbus only four miserable caravels of 50 to 70 tons burden and 150 men—care was taken that the radius of his new voyage should not be too extensive; he was not to be allowed to discover the whole world. In any case he had, to begin with, a new bit of work to do, and his peace of mind was restored when on the 14th March 1502 all his privileges and prerogatives were once more confirmed “without the least alteration being made in respect of yourself or your sons.” In addition he was promised “as a matter of course” that his sons and his brothers should be looked after. The younger son, Fernando, accompanied his father on the fourth and last voyage; the elder son, Diego, remained at the Court as a Groom of the Bedchamber to the queen. Bartolomeo also went with him, as he had no other place of abode, while the younger brother Diego did not leave Spain again; he had no desire to fall again into the hands of a Bobadilla. Columbus also received a code of instructions which gave him all necessary rights. In these instructions a great deal was said about new islands that were to be discovered, about their annexation, about gold and pearls and about all finds of that description being rigorously

controlled by the notary and officer Francesco de Porras who sailed with him, in order to prevent any of the crew from making away with anything of value—but nothing at all now about the conversion of the heathen. It was expressly stated that he was not to be allowed to bring slaves back with him, only natives who of their own accord wished to take a trip to Spain. He was not to land on Hispaniola until he was on his return voyage, and if it seemed necessary “to stay there for a little,” for there was naturally intense eagerness at home to hear of his new successes and to get his fresh news. With these instructions Columbus set out from Cadiz on the 9th May 1502.

On the 29th June Columbus anchored with his four ships off San Domingo. He sent on shore the post he had brought with him. One of his ships had proved unseaworthy, and he therefore requested the governor to give him another in exchange for it, and, further, to allow him to take shelter with his fleet in the harbour as a storm was threatening. Ovando had by this time concluded his judicial inquiry into the case of Roldan and his confederates. Most of the accused were in San Domingo, and he was probably afraid that the arrival of the admiral might cause fresh disturbance. On that account he refused him permission to enter the harbour, and he also declined to give him a ship, while so far as anything else was concerned he did not take the slightest notice of his predecessor! Columbus advised him not to allow meantime the twenty ships to sail which lay ready to embark. They were to take Bobadilla and the accused men to Spain, as well as the records of the criminal process. Ovando laughed at this as the advice of an alarmist seaman, and gave orders that the ships should set sail at once. Columbus found shelter on some other part of the coast, but his three other ships were driven far apart by the hurricane. It was not until after several days that they met again west of San Domingo.

Ovando's fleet had hardly reached the eastern point of Hispaniola when the storm broke upon them with full force. Only a few of these twenty ships returned in a pitiable condition to San Domingo, the rest of them sank with every soul on board. Bobadilla, Roldan and all the prisoners, one of whom was the unfortunate cacique Guarionex were drowned, and an immense treasure of gold which the ships carried sank into the sea. One single lucky ship struggled on to Spain. It had on board the gold

which Ovando, after his preliminary examination, had adjudicated to the admiral as his property.

The fact that the admiral's enemies perished in this way almost before his eyes must no doubt have seemed to him and to contemporaries to be the judgment of a higher Power. But with the ships the legal process that was to have saved his honour was buried, not, certainly, in official records, but in the waves of the ocean!

## CHAPTER XLIV

### LAST VOYAGE

THE admiral's fourth and last voyage is the most comprehensive of them all and the one that yielded the fullest disclosures, and, as it was accomplished in such small and crazy ships, it is a nautical feat of the first order. He reached the coast of Central America at Cape Honduras, and followed it past Nicaragua and Costa Rica to beyond the present-day Panama Canal, always on the search of a through passage such as that. For he had heard from the Indians that these lands also were bounded on the west by a sea—the first mention of the Pacific Ocean!—and he thought they were a peninsula like Cuba, or even farther India, which he would have to circumnavigate in order to arrive at the continent of Asia. Moreover, the stories he heard from the natives of a highly civilized, neighbouring nation—Yucatan or Mexico may possibly have been meant—confirmed him anew in his belief that he was now at last in the vicinity of the Grand Khan's realm and the wonder-lands of Marco Polo.

The unfortunate issue of this expedition, which put the courage and endurance of the leader and his companions to an unprecedented and terrible test, is described by Columbus in a letter to the sovereigns of Spain, dated 7th July 1505. He had it taken to Hispaniola by a loyal and dauntless comrade at a time of great distress, when he and the rest of his crew lay without a ship and half-starved on the north coast of Jamaica. This letter, in accordance with the instructions he had received, confines itself to the outstanding events of the voyage, principally to a statement of the amount of gold he had found, and runs, somewhat abbreviated and supplied with explanatory clauses, as follows:

"Pursued by the storm that had driven my ships apart at San Domingo, I fought my way through to Jamaica. The sea was calm, and a powerful current carried me as far as the 'Queen's Gardens,' the islands off the south coast of Cuba, yet



I did not get sight of land. From there I steered south against wind and current to 'Tierra firma' and hardly advanced 70 leagues. For sixty days I saw no harbour, nor had I been able on account of the storm to run in anywhere. Rain poured in ceaseless torrents, thunderstorm after thunderstorm followed one another. For eighty-eight days this stormy weather pursued me; during all that time we saw neither sun nor stars. Everything was swept away, anchor, rigging, boats, ropes and a part of the cargo. My crew were ill with exhaustion and took refuge in prayer; there was none of them who did not vow some pilgrimage or other. They were often so despairing that they made confession to one another. I was tortured chiefly by my anxiety for my thirteen-year-old son Fernando; but God gave him heart, he encouraged the others and carried himself as bravely as an old seaman, and was a comfort to me. I turned ill and was more than once near to death's door. I directed the course from a little cabin I had ordered to be erected on deck. My brother had the worst vessel and was most exposed to danger. My solicitude for him was all the greater because he had only followed me reluctantly. I have got on so far in life, happily enough indeed, that after twenty years of self-sacrificing and perilous service I have not a roof in Castile to cover my head, if I wish to sleep or eat I have to resort to an inn or tavern, though mostly I have not enough to pay my bill. Hence my heartrending thoughts about my son Diego, whom I left behind an orphan and the son of a father who has been deprived of his honour and his station. But I was certain that your majesties, as righteous and grateful princes, would more than repay him for all.

"It was only when I reached (from Cape Honduras along the coast) Cape Gracias a Dios, that wind and current became favourable to us. We came to the land of Cariay (Nicaragua). There I put my ships into good repair again, took provisions on board and allowed all my enfeebled company to recuperate. Here I heard of gold-mines in the provinces of Ciamba (the Chamba of Marco Polo) and I set out in search of them although I was dangerously ill. Two Indians guided me to Carambaru; the natives there wore shining plates of gold on their breasts, but they were unwilling to sell or barter any of them. Nevertheless they pointed out to me several places on the coast where gold is to be found; the last of them is Veragua, twenty leagues distant. I sailed farther in order to visit all these places. Half-

way on the voyage, however, a sudden storm drove the ships many leagues farther to the south (past Veragua). Still in all the places at which I called all that I had heard about them was confirmed. The same will therefore also hold true of the province of Ciguare which, according to the statements of the natives, is nine days' journey into the interior. There is a large quantity of gold, they tell me, in that region; the women wear chains of coral in their hair, everyone has bracelets and anklets of coral, and chairs, trunks and tables are decorated with it. Pepper is also a familiar commodity there, and the trade in it is carried on at markets and fairs. There are even said to be warships with cannon there, and horses, bows and arrows, swords and bucklers; the inhabitants in the main are very warlike, they go about richly clothed and live in splendidly furnished houses. Ciguare is said to be situated at the sea and only ten days' journey from the river Ganges. I shall be satisfied if only a tenth part of this is true.

"After the storm had driven us before it for a long distance I found shelter in a harbour. I did not wish any longer to sail back again, I considered the gold-mines (of Veragua) as already in our possession. I sailed farther on in rainy weather, and much against my will I had to wait for better weather in the harbour of Bastimentos. When I set off again and had sailed for about 15 leagues, wind and current drove me irresistibly back again to the harbour of Bastimentos. But before that I succeeded in running into the harbour of Retrete, where I had once more to remain for fifteen days on account of the wretched weather. The ships were in a desperate condition, I myself and the crew no less so. It was impossible to undertake anything. I resolved therefore to turn back and visit Veragua again.

"When at length I hoisted sail and had gone four leagues, the storm gathered anew, and I was soon so exhausted that I was at my wit's end. My wounds opened again, and for nine days I hovered between life and death. I never saw the sea in so wild an upheaval, the waves so high and so covered with foam. We could not get forward a single foot, but we were just as little able, owing to the storm, to seek shelter behind a cape. The sea seemed turned to blood, boiling in a kettle over a huge fire. The sky was dreadful to look at. For a day and a night it shone like a smelting furnace; lightning flashed incessantly, and I was prepared to see sails and masts shattered at any moment and the whole ship burst into flames.

The rain poured in torrents, as at the flood. The men were utterly desperate and longed for the end. Twice already the ships had lost boats, anchors and rigging; they had not a rag of sail left. At last I was able with God's help to reach the harbour of Gordo, where we had everything put into the best condition possible at the time.

"On New Year's day I began the struggle again; the ships were no longer seaworthy even in good weather, and the crew were either half-dead or at least ill. I reached Veragua at last on Epiphany. I was unconscious. God showed us a river (Belen) and a safe harbour. When after great difficulties we were fortunate to sail in with only ten spans of depth, the storm broke out afresh and it rained without ceasing until the 14th February.

"On the 6th February I sent 70 men with the boats up the river into the interior, although the rain was still pouring. After travelling for five miles across country they found numerous gold-mines, and the Indians who accompanied them led them to a hill that gave a wider outlook. There is gold everywhere here, the mines extend a twenty days' journey to the west. I learned afterwards that the quibian (as they called the cacique here) who sent the Indians had ordered them to show my men only the mines that lay farther away, belonging to one of his enemies, while in his own territory as much gold as a child is able to carry can always be gathered in ten days.

"As there was an abundance of timber and of the means of subsistence I began the building of a settlement. I had given liberal presents to the quibian as the ruler of this country, but I soon noticed that our friendship with him would not last long, for the people are savage and our crew very importunate. Moreover, I had taken possession of a domain that belonged to him. When he saw that I had begun to build and that a brisk trade with the natives was springing up, he determined to set fire to our houses and massacre us all. But we forestalled him and took him prisoner with his sons, his wives and his servants. He certainly managed to give us the slip on the following night, although he had been handed over to a reliable man to be guarded most rigorously; his sons, who had been under the charge of one of the ship's officers, also made their escape.

"The mouth of the river had been completely silted up with mud since January; in April the ships were so eaten up with borer-worms that they could no longer be kept above water.

As the river had forced a straight passage for itself, which was like a canal, I had three of the ships unloaded, and with great difficulty we managed to haul them out. Then the boats returned to our landing-place to fetch salt and drinking-water. But the waves now swept in with such force that they were no longer able to get over the bars of sand and silt. The natives then collected in great swarms, attacked the boats' crews and killed them. My brother and the rest of the men entrenched themselves in the remaining ship. I lay outside with the ships off the coast in immediate danger of sinking. I was to all intents and purposes alone and could scarcely keep on my feet for fever and exhaustion. All hope of rescue had gone.

"I dragged myself up to the poop of my ship and shouted for the captains, my voice trembling and tears streaming down my cheeks, but no answer came. I fell asleep overpowered by exhaustion. Then I heard a comforting voice that said to me: 'O thou of little faith! Why dost thou despair of Almighty God? What greater thing has He done for Moses or for His servant David? Since thy birth He has borne thee in His hands. When He saw that thou hadst reached a fitting age He made thy name known in wondrous fashion throughout the earth. He gave thee the opulent Indies for thy possession. Empowered thereto by Him thou didst make gifts of it according to thy liking. He gave thee the key of the chains that bound the Ocean in iron bands. Boundless lands were subject to thy rule, and the renown of thy name rang throughout Christendom. Did He do more for the Israelites when He delivered them from the thralldom of Egypt? Or for the shepherd David whom he raised to be king of Judah? Turn thy face to God and acknowledge thine error. God's mercy is without bounds. Thy advanced age will not prevent thee from fulfilling thy mission. Abraham was a hundred years old when he begat Isaac, and was Sarah very young? Art thou calling on human beings for help in thy despair? Answer! Was it God or the world that caused thee so many and so great griefs? God never recalls any of the rewards and promises He has made. He does not explain afterwards, when the services have been rendered, that such was not His intention and that a distinction had to be made. He does not do any injury simply to make His power felt. He keeps His word. He gives more than He promises. Is that the fashion of men? What thy Creator has done for thee He does not vouchsafe to everyone. Even now

He has the reward ready for the suffering and peril which thou hast had to undergo in the service of others.'

"In my stupor I understood every one of these words, yet I could make no reply, but only weep for my sins, until the unknown voice said to me again: 'Be not afraid, only have faith; all thy sorrows have been graven in marble and will abide unforgotten.'

"When I came to myself again I arose, and after nine days the weather cleared. I gathered the crew together and all who were still on shore; there were now so few of us that I could not leave a garrison behind there. I should have preferred to stay with all my men in Veragua, in order to maintain the settlement; but since your majesties do not know that place, I was afraid that no ship would ever find us there. For that reason I resolved to take another course.

"I set sail on Easter-eve. One of the ships remained lying in the river Belen with a heavy load; a second ship I had to leave behind in Belpuerto. I had now only two ships left, both of them rotten, eaten up by worms and riddled all over. I had no more boats, no victuals, though 7000 miles of sea-voyage lay before me and the certain prospect of perishing with my son and brother and my whole crew. I should have liked very much to have with me as companions on this voyage those clever people at home who thrust their word into everything, who carp at everything, and who are always able to have done everything in another and better way! But another voyage awaits them, unless all my faith is vain.

"On the 13th May I reached the province of Mango, which lies adjacent to Cathay and then directed my course to Hispaniola. For two days the weather was fine, then we encountered an adverse wind. I meant to avoid the numerous islands (in the south of Cuba) with their reefs and shoals. But the storm drove us back, although we were carrying no sail. I had to land on an island, and lost three anchors all at once. At midnight a storm burst that looked as though it would destroy the world. The cables of the other ship snapped and it rammed my vessel, and it was a miracle that we were not all smashed to pieces.

"After six days the weather improved, and at the end of June we reached Jamaica, despite a persistent adverse wind. The ships were complete wrecks; three pumps were working incessantly, all the men were baling out with buckets and kettles

the water as it rushed in; the damage caused by the borer-worms could no longer be dealt with in any other way. I steered a straight course to Hispaniola—28 leagues more! But the second ship was already sinking and had to take refuge in a harbour. I attempted to keep to the open sea, still fighting against the storm, but my ship as well sank deeper and deeper—then God brought me in a wondrous fashion to the coast of Jamaica. What I am writing sounds incredible, but I have not told the hundredth part of what we experienced, and everyone who was with me can bear witness to this.

“May it please your majesties to send to my help a ship of more than 64 tons burden, with 200 hundredweights of ship’s biscuit and other provisions. That will suffice to take me and my men back to Spain from Hispaniola. I am sending this letter by an Indian; it would be a veritable miracle of it duly arrives at its destination!”

## CHAPTER XLV

### THE RESCUE OF THE ADMIRAL

THE story of the rescue of Columbus and his men from their imprisonment on Jamaica is told by Diego Mendez, who accompanied the expedition as royal notary, and who was to have remained as commanding officer in the new settlement at Veragua. In 1536 he made a will from which it appeared that he too had not received from the Spanish government and from the heirs of Columbus the reward for his services he believed himself entitled to demand. In order to establish these claims for his heirs he describes at full length in this will his heroic deeds on the fourth voyage of discovery, and in particular the critical situation of the shipwrecked mariners on Jamaica in the summer of 1503. Mendez relates:

"When the two wrecks were driven ashore, we built two cabins and thatched them with straw. I distributed the last rations of biscuits and wine, and, as nobody else would venture to go in search of victuals, I took my dagger in my hand and pushed on with three men into the interior. God so ordained it that we met peaceable Indians, who received us amicably and gave us food to our heart's desire. I arranged with the cacique of the village that his subjects should bake cassava bread for us, hunt and fish for us, and bring to the admiral every day a specified amount of provisions. In payment for this we offered them knives, hooks, combs, bells and small necklaces of blue beads and other trinkets we had brought with us for that purpose. When we were agreed about this I sent a man back to the ships to request the admiral to fetch that day's ration and pay for it. Then I went to a second village three hours' journey farther on, and made the same arrangement with its inhabitants and its cacique and sent a second messenger on a similar errand to the admiral.

"From there I repaired to a powerful cacique named Huarea. He also received me in a very friendly manner, entertained me hospitably and gave orders at once to furnish in three days as

much food as could be levied. I also arranged that he should take a specified quantity of victuals to our camp, to be paid for in ready cash. Here I sent the third messenger to the admiral with the provisions that had already been paid for, and requested the cacique to go with me in company with two of his Indians to the east end of the island. One of them carried my hammock, the other had the provisions.

"In this manner I came to the east coast of Jamaica and found there a cacique called Ameyro, with whom I soon formed a warm friendship. We exchanged names, an act which signifies brotherhood among these tribes. He sold me an excellent canoe for a tin kettle, a coat and one of my two shirts, and gave me in addition six Indians for a crew. When I passed the villages where I had ordered the rest of the provisions I met the men whom the admiral had sent. I took all on board and we went back together to our encampment, where the admiral received me with great joy. He never wearied of looking at me, embracing me, asking me about my experiences and thanking God for the happy result of my perilous journey. The crew were no less pleased, for they had consumed the last of their bread and were already suffering from hunger. The Indians now brought every day enough provisions for us all.

"Ten days later the admiral took me aside and said to me: 'Diego Mendez, my dear son, none of those who remain, except you and me, has any suspicion of the jeopardy we are in, a small band against an immense number of ill-humoured and fickle savages. If they suddenly take the notion of setting fire to our two cabins, then we are lost. The provisions may fail to appear; the Indians do not consider themselves bound by agreements. It is quite out of the question for us to take anything by force. There is only one means of saving us all. Someone must row across to Hispaniola on the canoe you have bought and obtain a ship for us. That alone can rescue us from our perilous situation.'

"I replied: 'Your Excellency, I am thoroughly well aware of the danger that surrounds us; it is perhaps greater than we imagine. But I consider it quite impossible that so small a craft should sail from here to Hispaniola so far across the open sea, among islands and raging billows, for I do not know of anyone who would have the courage to attempt that.'

"The admiral shook his head and answered: 'The only



person I consider capable of accomplishing this deed is yourself! 'Your Excellency,' I replied, 'I have risked my life more than once to save you and your crew. Each time God has marvellously protected me. Still many of my comrades have grumbled because you have so often entrusted me with duties, in which honour was to be gained and which others would have undertaken just as willingly. I should like therefore to request you to call all the men together and ask them if any of them will volunteer for this venturesome undertaking. If they all refuse, as I suspect they will, this time again I shall leap into the breach.'

"On the very next morning the admiral put the proposal to the assembled company. At first everyone was silent; finally some of them urged that there was scarcely any purpose in discussing such an impossible plan; it was sheer madness to try to cross that dangerous arm of the sea in a canoe. Thereupon I rose and said: 'I have only one life, but I am ready to risk it for the salvation of your Excellency and of the crew.'

"When the admiral heard my decision, he embraced me and kissed me, saying: 'I well knew that no one but you had the courage for this; put firm trust in God, and He will carry you, as He has hitherto done, through all dangers.'

"On the following day I put a keel on the canoe, caulked and tarred it carefully and nailed some planks forward and aft, so that the waves might not wash in so readily, put in a mast with a sail and took on board the necessary provisions for myself, a Spaniard and six Indians. The canoe could not possibly carry more than eight men.

"Thereupon I bade farewell to his Excellency and my comrades and sailed along the coast of the island, but had the misfortune to fall here into the hands of Indian pirates, from whom God rescued me in a marvellous way. When I had reached the eastern extremity of Jamaica, I meant to wait until the sea was calmer, and I was attacked here by natives, who seized the canoe and meant to murder us all. I saw what awaited us and I succeeded in stealing away to my canoe and so escaping. Thus after fifteen days I stepped suddenly into the admiral's presence again. His Excellency was greatly rejoiced at my escape and he asked me at once if I would venture to make the attempt again. I explained that I was ready even to do that, but only on condition that I had an escort to the eastern extremity of the island. The admiral

sent seventy men with me under the command of the Adelantado. They were to wait at the eastern corner of the island until I was on the open sea, and then three days longer.

"So I started for the second time. But for four days the sea was so rough that I was not able to set sail. At length the sea became quieter, and I took farewell of my companions, and we all wept. I commended myself to God and to the Mother Mary and made straight off, never lifting my hand from the helm for one moment during five days and four nights, while my companions rowed.

"On the fifth day we reached Cape San Miguel. For two days now we had had nothing to eat or drink. But when we landed on the magnificently wooded beach many natives rushed up to us and brought us ample food, and we were able to take rest there for two days. I left my companions behind here, and took with me six natives of that district, who were to row me along the coast of Hispaniola. When I was still 24 miles from San Domingo, I heard from the commandant of the island of Azoa that the governor, Ovando, was on campaign against the Indians of Xaragua, 50 miles away. Accordingly I left my boat there and took my way alone on foot to Xaragua. The governor kept me waiting seven months, until he had hanged and burned eighty-four caciques, among whom was even Anacaona, the most respected princess on the island and the widow of Caonabo.

"When the war was over I went with the troops to San Domingo and remained there, awaiting a ship from Spain. None had been seen for a whole year. Fortunately three vessels arrived at last. I bought one of them and loaded it with provisions, bread, wine, meat pigs, sheep and fruit, and sent it to Jamaica, while I myself went to Spain to give the king and queen an account of all that had happened.

"Only a few days after I had left Jamaica the Indians of that region had refused to deliver any more provisions. Thereupon the admiral summoned all the caciques, reprimanded them and warned them about their conduct. God would punish them for it, and on that very night He would darken the moon as a sign of His wrath at their refusal. The admiral knew, of course, that an eclipse of the moon was about to take place. When the moon was completely darkened on the following night they were very alarmed, and made a solemn promise to bring the supplies

regularly after that. They kept their promise faithfully. In after days the admiral often said to me that he was never so glad in his life as he was when he saw my ship arriving on that June day of 1504, for he had given up all hope of getting away from Jamaica alive. On this ship the admiral sailed to San Domingo, and from there he returned to Castile."

## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE WORLD'S REWARD

ON the 7th November 1504 Columbus arrived again at the harbour of San Lucar. No one took any notice of him. The Court, no doubt, had other troubles: three weeks later, on the 26th November, Queen Isabella died, the only person in whose impartiality Columbus, in his secret heart, placed a last hope. The terrible exertions and happenings of his last voyage had broken down his stamina and crippled his strength of will; sickness, old age, disgust at the world and profound resignation were the fetters that bound him now more strongly than the irons in which he had been dragged to Spain two and a half years before. To his account of his discovery of Veragua, dated 7th July 1504, he added a still longer postscript, in which he gave affecting expression to his sorrow at the melancholy fate of Hispaniola. Its last words were: "I did not undertake this voyage to gain honour and wealth; all such hopes had already perished within me. I came to your majesties with loyal devotion and with an ardent desire to achieve great exploits. Now I have but one wish remaining, if it please God to deliver me from this prison, and that is to be permitted to make a pilgrimage to Rome and to other sacred sites."

There had certainly been no expectation in Castile of ever seeing the deposed viceroy again. Nothing had been left undone to prevent this from happening. An unwritten and unspoken death-sentence was to be carried out by unseen hands. No order was given, but each of these secret agents knew that obedience to this command would give satisfaction in the highest quarters, and that the executioner would receive not punishment but a discreet reward. Columbus was not a Spaniard, and his predominant position as viceroy, which he had cleverly "sneaked"—all good patriots were agreed about that—was a blot on the escutcheon of the Castilian nation, an offence to every genuine Spanish hidalgo, and a thorn in the flesh for the king, who had tried in vain to show the admiral that his agreement had not

been meant to be taken in that sense, and that a distinction had to be made! Whoever removed this alien body without any fuss would deserve the silent thanks of the fatherland—silent so far as betraying words were concerned, but eloquent in reward and promotion. But without any fuss—entirely without any fuss—not in the clumsy way that ass Bobadilla had acted two years ago!

The person above all others to whom this task fell was the present governor of Hispaniola, cavalier Ovando. A sentence in the will of Diego Mendez lights up with a flash this darkest chapter of Spanish colonial history: "The governor kept me waiting seven months, until he had hanged and burned eighty-four caciques!" The Italian Columbus had condemned mutineering, murdering and plundering Spaniards to the gallows. Therefore the first viceroy of Hispaniola was a tyrant, who, along with those adventurers, his brothers, meant to enrich themselves at the expense of an alien nation. This evil was at last redressed, and what Columbus was driven to do by necessity had now become a virtue—the indigenous population were simply beasts of burden, cattle for slaughter, slaves without a fraction of property or rights! Eighty-four caciques at one blow—treacherously attacked, burned, hanged; and then a merry chase after terrified Indians, with its wonderful bag that filled the hearts of the Spanish hidalgos with pride—heaps of corpses of inoffensive natives, men, women and children—off with them to the stake! Almost within a generation the red race on Hispaniola was practically exterminated! That was the colonizing work of the blood-hound Ovando and his successors.

Columbus had willy-nilly to turn to this Ovando to get speedy assistance for himself and his ship-wrecked crew on Jamaica, for before his letter reached Spain, and a royal order had been issued and executed, certainly not one of them would have been alive. Ovando too, said to himself—Was not this after all the best solution and the one that would cause the least fuss? The admiral had simply been unfortunate—he had either died of famine or been killed by the natives on Jamaica, whither he had fought his way—who could afterwards say with any certainty what had happened? The whole of Spain could then mourn with exultant hearts. It was quite impossible to help him at the moment! There was war in Hispaniola, no ships could be spared—it would mean certain death for Mendez to try to journey back again to San Domingo from the seat of war. So wait, wait—until the

campaign was finished and—meantime, it was to be hoped, the devil had taken the admiral. Ovando had no ship to save Columbus, but he had a ship with which to jeer at his misfortune! About *eight* months after the departure of Diego Mendez a small caravel appeared one evening before the camp at Jamaica! The captain sent a messenger ashore, where the hapless men were mad with joy at this rescue they had scarcely hoped for. The messenger delivered a letter from the governor: He regretted extremely that he was unable to help them and presented them with a side of bacon and a small cask of wine!—the condemned men were to have one more enjoyable day! The captain had no authority to do anything further, and he returned the same evening, leaving the despairing men on the shore. The captain was one of the rebels on Hispaniola, Diego de Escobar, a former friend and confederate of Roldan's! The sole object of his secret mission was to put the question: Is anyone still alive there? The answer rang out from a hundred throats: All of us!—Then 'good-bye just now!—the next time there would certainly be no longer any answer, or, perhaps, the one that was wanted—the admiral is dead! Then even the smallest caravel would be large enough to rescue at least some of his Spanish companions! Why then did they not remove the stone of offence more quickly? Did they not understand how the land lay? They understood only too well! As a matter of fact even in this hour of supreme need there was no lack of mutineers! The admiral was held responsible for the fatherland's having abandoned its own children. It was on his account that they were all about to perish there—their rescue could only be bought by his death! The royal notary Porras put himself at the head of the gang. It was a dangerous business to assassinate the culprit with their own hands—the Adelantado was still there, and the little band of loyal men each wielded a deadly blade. So the well-tried recipe was followed and the Indians were incited to rebel—perhaps the intention was that they should do this deed of blood. When this hope was disappointed, a regular battle began among the crew themselves, which the Indians watched with unbounded amazement. The issue of the fight foiled the plans of the mutineers. The ring-leader Porras had already wounded the Adelantado—then he felt the admiral's fist at his throat—he was put in irons and imprisoned. The others lost heart and laid down their weapons—till the next time! The admiral did not venture to put the rebels

to death—after that the fighting never stopped, and the scanty remnant of survivors was entirely at the mercy of the Indians.

Even then Ovando did not send a ship to rescue the expedition, nor was anything done in Spain! There, certainly, the convenient excuse could be given—the matter had been taken in hand, the governor would, as a matter of course, take action—and so forth. The ship that rescued the unfortunate men after thirteen months, was not a vessel belonging to the Spanish government! Diego Mendez had to buy it with the admiral's own money. And when at last this irksome man, who, it was imagined, had been got rid of for all time in Jamaica, did nevertheless return to Spain, he had still to plead the cause of his men and see that their wages were paid!

His own affairs were in a state of hopeless confusion. His property had not been handed over to him, the lawsuit was not yet settled, a commission was investigating the matter. In May 1505 Columbus, crippled with gout, riding on a mule which had been graciously allowed him for the journey—to encourage horse-breeding only princes were allowed to use mules for riding—dragged himself from Seville to Segovia, where the king received him with chilly courtesy. An arbitrator was to give the decision, the best man whom he could wish to have—his old protector, Diego de Deza, formerly prior in Salamanca, now bishop of Valencia. Were his interests not being well looked after? A faint spark of hope began to glimmer again—perhaps after all there was some vestige of the justice, of which he had long despaired, still to be found. But the mild and well-intentioned bishop by himself was helpless, the commission was still deliberating on the lawsuit, and everything was taking its usual course. Wait! Wait! Meanwhile the admiral was living on loans, as his letters to his son Diego incontestably prove. But these letters, too, which reveal his finest traits as a man, are tinged with sorrowful resignation—they show the death-struggle of a strong nature that is quickly bleeding to death. Columbus breathed out his great soul on the 21st May 1506. He died at Valladolid, and his end was as quiet and unnoticed as though it had only been the death of some unknown sailor from Genoa. His burial was not an important event. For years some of his acquaintances in Valladolid believed that he was still living at the Spanish Court! He was forgotten because he was no longer needed—and even he himself had done very little for his fame in

after years. Only the accounts of his first and last voyages—his letters to the Spanish monarchs—reached the public, nothing else, and very soon his contemporaries themselves no longer knew even the dates of his discoveries! It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that investigators turned their attention to him, and the sun of fame began to shine on his name, never to set again. Another man gave the name to the New World that Columbus found. Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine merchant, made several voyages to the West from 1499 onwards, and published widely read books about the lands discovered there. These literary efforts led a German schoolmaster in Lorraine, Martin Waldseemüller, to suggest in 1507, that those lands should be called America, and it was not long before his example was followed by a world that soon forgets. Amerigo Vespucci himself was quite innocent of this wrong. But the land, which Vespucci following the trail of Columbus really discovered in company with Hojeda—New Granada on the north coast of South America—at least bears today the name Columbia.

After his father's death the title of "admiral" passed to his elder son Diego, but even he was refused the governorship of the Indies, to which he was entitled by the agreement. Not until he married in 1508 a lady belonging to the powerful family of the Albas, did he rise to be governor. After a lawsuit with the Crown that lasted for years, Emperor Charles V, who as Philip's son was also king of Spain, appointed him viceroy as a matter of grace and not of right, and the lawsuit still went on after his death. As Columbus had become "soft"—so in the end was his grandson. He renounced his grandfather's privileges and was indemnified with landed estates and the title of Duke of Veragua.

Columbus was laid to rest in the Franciscan cloister at Valladolid, but after three years his coffin was conveyed to the Carthusian cloister of Las Cuevas in Seville. His wish to be buried in the New World was satisfied in 1540—his body was brought to San Domingo; it rested in the cathedral there until 1795. Then it was taken from there to Havana in Cuba, and from there it returned again in 1899 to Spain, to find a final resting-place in the cathedral of Seville.

Hispaniola or Haiti, which was the dearest of all his discoveries to the deposed admiral, became the hapless child of Spanish colonization and it grew more and more sickly. To replace the



Indians, who had been wiped out, negro slaves, who were more efficient plantation-workers were introduced in large numbers. They increased so rapidly that three hundred years later they finally drove out their white masters after a terrible massacre and became the first negro republic in the world. As early as 1697 Spain had ceded this part of the world to France, and under its rule San Domingo became more prosperous. The town Isabella, which Columbus first founded was very soon given up owing to its unhealthy situation; it was known as the grave of the Spanish hidalgos. Falling into decay it gathered round it dismal memories that continued to haunt its ruins for a long time. Some settlers in the neighbourhood hunting wild boar were one day wandering through its deserted streets when they suddenly saw a procession of magnificently garbed Spanish knights in peaked hats and flowing cloaks stalk past. Startled by this puzzling spectacle they greeted them with deference. The knights replied to their greeting, taking off their hats and with them—their heads at the same time. Then the gruesome sight melted away in the dazzling sunshine.

















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